



**Cult Image
and
Divine
Representation
in the
Ancient
Near East**



Edited by Neal H. Walls

American Schools of Oriental Research

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Brian B. Schmidt
editor

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Billie Jean Collins, Director of Publications

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IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

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American Schools of Oriental Research
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CULT IMAGE AND DIVINE REPRESENTATION IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

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Preface

This collection of essays originated in a group of invited papers for the “Israelite Religion in its West Asian Environment” section at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in November, 2000. The previous decade had witnessed a resurgence of scholarly interest and activity in the study of divine representation in ancient Israel and the Near East. The section’s steering committee therefore decided that the time was ripe to reexamine the complex issue of Israel’s aniconic tradition within the context of other ancient Near Eastern iconic religions. Each of the following scholars was invited to comment upon the current state of research in his or her respective field of expertise and to engage the difficult task of reconstructing ancient religious ideology. While biblical prophets ridiculed the notion of humans fashioning an idol that they would then worship, ancient Near Eastern theologians developed a sophisticated religious system in which divine beings could be physically manifest within the material of a cultic image without being limited by that embodiment. In the essays collected below, the four authors reflect on the intriguing subject of cultic images and divine iconography from divergent scholarly perspectives. The result is an interesting and eclectic group of essays that explores the textual and artifactual evidence for the creation and veneration of divine images in the ancient Near East.

The Egyptologist and art historian Gay Robins introduces the volume with an engaging examination of cult statues in ancient Egypt. Housed within the temple’s inner shrine, the Egyptian cult statue functioned as the embodiment of the divine and the focus of cultic ritual. Robins accomplishes the difficult task of explaining ancient Egyptian religious beliefs and practices in a concise and insightful study.

Billie Jean Collins presents a careful and methodologically sensitive essay on the identity and significance of cult statues in Hittite Anatolia. Her detailed study summarizes the previous work of Hittite specialists and explores the available textual evidence to present her own insights into an often obscure subject.

The third essay, by Michael B. Dick, examines the theological and sacramental implications of divine incarnation in Mesopotamian cult images.

Dick's contribution to the volume builds upon his earlier, ground-breaking studies of the Mesopotamian ritual designed to enliven a cult statue (the *miš pî*). In a more speculative mode, Dick here employs a phenomenological and comparative approach to trace the similarities and differences between the ancient Mesopotamian evidence and the Eucharistic theology of the Roman Catholic Church.

Theodore J. Lewis is given the final word on the subject in this collection's fourth chapter. Lewis presents a comprehensive survey of the methodological problems in the study of Syro-Palestinian divine iconography. Lewis's chapter is especially informative in its conscientious methodology and forward-looking perspective on the analysis of Syro-Palestinian divine images.

Special thanks go to each of the contributors, series editor Brian B. Schmidt, Billie Jean Collins and the editorial staff at ASOR, and my research assistant, Jessica Margrave Schirm, for their fine work in bringing this project to completion.

Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ABD | <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. D. N. Freedman et al. (6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992) |
| AHw | W. von Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> (3 vols.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965–81) |
| Asarh. | R. Borger, <i>Die Inschriften Asarhaddons, Königs von Assyrien</i> (Archiv für Orientforschung Beiheft 9; Graz, 1956) |
| BM | British Museum |
| ca. | <i>circa</i> |
| CAD | <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1956–) |
| CANE | <i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> , ed. J. M. Sasson (4 vols.; New York: Scribner's, 1995) |
| CHD | <i>The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , ed. H. G. Güterbock and H. A. Hofner, Jr. (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1989–) |
| COS | <i>The Context of Scripture</i> , ed. W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger, Jr., vol. 1, <i>Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World</i> (Leiden: Brill, 1997); vol. 2, <i>Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World</i> (Leiden: Brill, 2000) |
| CTH | E. Laroche, <i>Catalogue des textes hittites</i> , 2 nd ed. (Paris, 1971) |
| DDD | <i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> , 2 nd ed., ed. K. van der Toorn et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999) |
| DS | <i>Enchiridion Symbolorum: Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum</i> , 33 rd ed., ed. A. S. H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer (Barcelona: Herder, 1965) |
| EA | El-Amarna Tablets |

| | |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| JPS | Jewish Publication Society |
| KBo | <i>Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi</i> , ed. H. Otten and C. Rüster (Leipzig: Hinrichs [vols. 1–22]; Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1916–) |
| KTU | <i>Die Keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit</i> , ed. M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín (<i>Alter Orient und Altes Testament</i> 24/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976). 2 nd enlarged edition of <i>KTU: The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places</i> , ed. M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995). |
| KUB | <i>Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi</i> (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1921–) |
| NEAEHL | <i>The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> , ed. E. Stern (4 vols.; Carta, 1993) |
| NRSV | New Revised Standard Version |
| OBO | Orbis biblicus et orientalis |
| PBS | Publications of the Babylonian Section, University Museum, University of Pennsylvania |
| RIA | <i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i> , ed. E. Ebeling et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1928–) |
| STT | <i>The Sultantepe Tablets</i> , vol. 1, ed. O. R. Gurney and J. J. Finkelstein (<i>Occasional Publications of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara</i> 3; London: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 1957); <i>The Sultantepe Tablets</i> , vol. 2, ed. O. R. Gurney and P. Hulin (<i>Occasional Publications of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara</i> 3; London: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 1957) |
| TuL | E. Ebeling, <i>Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier</i> (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1931) |
| UF | <i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i> |
| VBoT | A. Götze, <i>Verstreute Boghazköi-Texte</i> (Marburg: A. Götze, 1930) |
| WAW | Writings from the Ancient World |

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Chapter One

Cult Statues in Ancient Egypt

Gay Robins

In general, statues in ancient Egypt were places where a non-physical entity—a deity, the royal *ka*-spirit, or the *ka*-spirits of the dead—could manifest in this world.¹ Statues provided physical bodies for these beings and allowed them to be the recipients of ritual actions. In order for a statue to function in this way, it had to undergo the Opening of the Mouth ritual, which vitalized it and enabled it to house the being it represented.² Statues, in fact, formed part of a larger group of objects, including the physical bodies of deceased individuals that underwent this ritual.³ Living bodies could also house non-physical entities. Every living human body contained its *ka*, the life force that animated it.⁴ Sacred animals, such as the Apis Bull, were places where deities could manifest.⁵ The human body of the king became the container for the royal *ka*-spirit, the divine element of kingship that passed from one legitimate king to the next.⁶

When a non-physical being manifested in a statue, this anchored the being in a controlled location where living human beings could interact with

¹ I would like to thank Brian Winterfeldt for his generous support of my work. I would also like to thank John Baines for reading the original version of this paper and for letting me read his notes relating to a presentation he gave at Harvard on this topic.

² H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, *Die Vision von der Statue im Stein: Studien zum altägyptischen Mundöffnungsritual* (Schriften der Philosophisch-historischen Klasse der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften 5; Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1998); D. Lorton, "The Theology of Cult Statues in Ancient Egypt," in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. B. Dick (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 123–210.

³ R. Grieshammer, "Mundöffnungs(ritual)," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, vol. 4 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1982), 223–24; A. M. Roth, "Opening of the Mouth," *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (3 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2:605.

⁴ H. Bonnet, "On Understanding Syncretism" (trans. J. Baines), *Orientalia* 68 (1999): 183.

⁵ E. Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, trans. J. Baines (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 136–37.

⁶ L. Bell, "Luxor Temple and the cult of the Royal *Ka*," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44 (1985): 251–94; idem, "The New Kingdom 'Divine' Temple: The Example of Luxor," in *The Temple in Ancient Egypt*, ed. B. E. Shafer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 137–44.

it through ritual performance—offering, burning incense, recitation—to ensure the continuity and wellbeing of the cosmos, Egypt, the local community, the family, and so on. Deities, the king, the dead and the living all inhabited the created universe, could all impact on each other, and were all subject to the constant threat of chaos overwhelming the created order of the world.

Although most statues were recipients of some form of cult activity, not every statue is what Egyptologists would call a cult statue. The term “cult statue” is normally taken to refer to the main statue in a temple that represented the deity of that temple and was housed in the temple’s sanctuary. It is likely that there were in addition portable cult statues that were carried out in procession (below). Each deity had its recognizable physical form—animal, human or mixed; male, female; anthropomorphic, mummiform,⁷ ithyphallic—with typical items of insignia, for it was important that the statue was recognizable and appropriate to the deity who was supposed to manifest in it. One text for the reign of Horemheb states that the king “raised up the gods’ temples and created their statues, each in their exact shape.”⁸

Deities were part of the created universe, which encompassed the celestial realm (*pt*), the underworld (*dw3t*) and Egypt or, more generally, the earth (*t3*). The first two regions were inhabited by deities (and the dead) and the third was the realm of the living. In order for human beings to interact with deities and to persuade them to create, renew, and maintain the universe, these beings had to be brought down to earth. It was the cult statue in the temple that formed the main, most powerful meeting point between the human and the divine. This interaction had to be strictly controlled in order to avoid both the potential dangers of unrestricted divine power and the pollution of the divine by the impurity of the human world. While the ability of deities to act in the visible, human realm was brought about through their manifestation in a physical body, manifestation in one body did not in any sense restrict a deity, for the non-corporeal essence of a deity was unlimited by time and space, and could manifest in all its “bodies,” in all locations, all at one time. Nor were deities bound to their earthly physical bodies, which meant that the statue and the whole temple had to be made

⁷That is, a human body without separate limbs, resembling a mummy but not necessarily representing a mummy, see Hornung, *Conceptions of God*, 107.

⁸W. J. Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 233. See also P. Grandet, *Le Papyrus Harris I (BM 9999)*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1994), 259 (25, 10).

as attractive and appropriate as possible to the deity concerned, so that the being would wish to take up residence there.⁹

Theoretically it was possible for deities to refuse to manifest on earth. According to an inscription from the reign of Tutankhamun this is what happened in the reign of his predecessor Akhenaten. That king had declared that only the sun god in the form of Aten, the sun disk in which the sun god manifested himself, should be worshiped (fig. 1.1). He destroyed the names and images of the god Amun and neglected the temples and cults of other deities. Looking back on this period, Tutankhamun's inscription claims that "the gods were ignoring this land ... if one prayed to a god, to ask something from him, he did not come at all; and if one beseeched any goddess in the same way, she did not come at all."¹⁰ The purpose of the inscription is to tell how the king restored the neglected cults of the gods: "[fashioning] their statues out of the best genuine electrum from foreign lands; building their shrines anew as monuments for the length of continuity and endowed with possessions for ever; instituting divine offerings for them, consisting of regular daily sacrifices; and providing their food offerings on earth." As a result, "the gods and goddesses who are in this land, their hearts are joyful Life and dominion proceed from them to the nose of the victorious king."¹¹

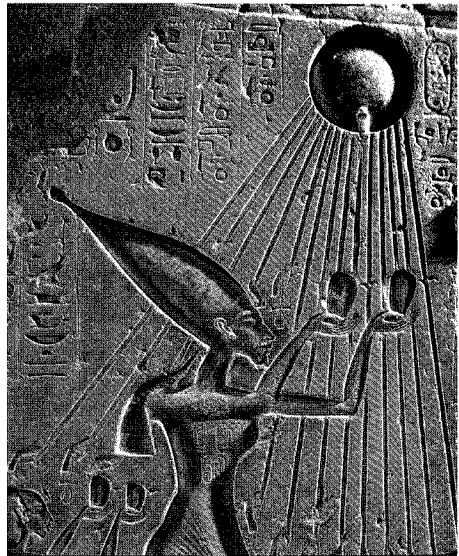


Fig. 1.1. The pharaoh Akhenaten and his wife Nefertiti make offerings to Aten, the sun god. He is portrayed as a sun disk with rays radiating downward. Each ray ends with a small hand, two of which hold the ankh life symbol. Aten is referred to in literature as "light." Egyptian Museum, Cairo. Photo by Erich Lessing courtesy of Art Resource, NY.

⁹ For the nature of deities in ancient Egypt, see Hornung, *Conceptions of God*; Bonnet, "On Understanding Syncretism," 181–98, especially 188; J. Baines, "Egyptian Syncretism: Hans Bonnet's Contribution," *Orientalia* (1999): 199–214; J. Baines, "Egyptian Deities in Context: Multiplicity, Unity, and the Problem of Change," in *One God or Many?: Concepts of Divinity in the Ancient World*, ed. B. Nevling Porter (Transactions of the Casco Bay Assyriological Institute 1; Chebeague, ME: Casco Bay Assyriological Institute, 2000), 9–78.

¹⁰ Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*, 213.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 214.

Although the temples at Heliopolis, the main cult center of the sun god, no longer survive, architectural evidence from other sites suggests that the sun god's cult was usually performed in spaces open to the sky.¹² Thus, the visible sun disk would itself form a cult image for the god. This certainly was the case during Akhenaten's reign when all the temples to the Aten were open to the sky. There were no statues of the god and the two-dimensional representation of the Aten showed a sun disk with rays emanating from it. Undoubtedly the actual sun in the sky served as the cult image of the Aten, rendering superfluous any cult statues in his temples.

A very fragmentary text from one of the early Aten temples at Karnak, built while the king still called himself Amenhotep, apparently shows that the king had a decidedly negative attitude toward traditional cult statues. In it, the king appears to be comparing the made images of traditional deities with the Aten who made himself, to the detriment of the former: "Look, I am speaking that I might inform [you concerning] the forms of the gods, I know [their?] temples [and I am versed in] the writings, (namely) the inventories of their primeval bodies [and I have beheld them] as they cease, one after the other, (whether) consisting of any sort of precious stone ..., [except for the god who begat] himself by himself, no one knowing the mysteries ...: he goes where he pleases and they know not [his] going ... toward him at night."¹³ It is frustrating that the text is so broken, but it does suggest that for the king who would become Akhenaten there was something unsatisfactory about traditional cult statues.

Most surviving statues of deities are made out of stone or bronze, but these were not usually the main cult statues of a temple. Descriptions of cult statues show that they were made of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, turquoise and other highly valued materials.¹⁴ As can be imagined, few cult statues survive today, since most have long since been melted down for their metal and their inlaid stones reused. However, it is possible that a 42 cm high, solid silver statue of a falcon-headed deity, once overlaid with gold, and with a wig inlaid with strips of lapis lazuli, was a cult statue.¹⁵ Unfortunately, we know nothing of its provenance. One can only speculate that it survived

¹² G. Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 62.

¹³ Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*, 31. The text was first published and discussed by D. B. Redford, "A Royal Speech from the Blocks of the 10th Pylon," *Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar* 3 (1981): 87–102.

¹⁴ E.g., Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*, 213, 233; Grandet, *Le Papyrus Harris I* (BM 9999), vol. 1, 227 (4,6), 228 (4, 10–11), 229 (6, 4), 259 (25, 10–11).

¹⁵ The Miho Museum, *Catalogue of the Miho Museum (South Wing)* (The Miho Museum, 1997), 19–20; N. Reeves and J. H. Taylor, *Howard Carter before Tutankhamun* (London: British Museum Press, 1992), 172.

by being buried in a time of danger to its temple and that it was not found again until the twentieth century. Other statues that may be cult statues are a solid gold image of the god Amun, 17.5 cm high, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art,¹⁶ and a silver and gold image of the same god, 23 cm high, from his temple at Karnak, now in the British Museum.¹⁷ However, there is also the possibility that all these could be very prestigious votive offerings. The small size of the last two does not itself militate against their being cult statues, since the interior space of some surviving stone shrines that would have contained a wooden shrine within which the cult statue was placed suggests that many cult statues were small.

It has also been suggested that cult statues were made of wood with metal elements, gilding, stone inlays, paint, and even clothing, comparable, for instance, to many Catholic images of the Virgin Mary and other saints.¹⁸ Such statues would, in our eyes today, be far more life-like than cast metal statues. None of the descriptions of cult statues in texts goes into detail about their construction beyond describing the precious materials used. However, the technique of making statues with wooden cores covered by sheet metal was known. The Mitannian king Tushratta complained to Amenhotep IV that the supposedly solid gold statues promised to him by Amenhotep III turned out to be wood covered by sheet gold.¹⁹ Wooden statuettes from the tomb of Tutankhamun are covered with gesso and thin sheet gold; their eyes are inlaid and their crowns and insignia are made of gold-plated bronze.²⁰ A gold falcon head and crown, found buried in the temple of the falcon god Horus at Hierakonpolis, was apparently once attached to a wooden body covered with copper plates, the whole most probably having been a cult statue in the temple.²¹ An inscription of Amenemhat II mentions divine statues of ebony, *ssd*-wood and every precious wood.²² A letter from Deir el-Medina includes

¹⁶ MMA 26.7.1412; G. Robins, *Egyptian Statues* (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications, 2001), fig. 6.

¹⁷ EA 60006; E. R. Russmann, *Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art from the British Museum* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 172–73 n. 82.

¹⁸ Bell, “New Kingdom ‘Divine’ Temple,” 134; J. Baines, “Stone and Other Materials in Ancient Egypt: Usages and Values,” in *Pierres Égyptiennes ... Chefs-d’œuvres pour l’Éternité*, ed. C. Karlshausen and T. De Putter (Mons: Faculté Polytechnique de Mons, 2000), 30.

¹⁹ W. L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 85, EA 26.

²⁰ H. Carter, *The Tomb of Tutankhamen discovered by the Late Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter*, vol. 3 (New York: George H. Doran, 1923), 52.

²¹ J. E. Quibell, *Hierakonpolis*, vol. 1 (Egyptian Research Account 4; London: Bernard Quaritch, 1900), 11, pls. 41–43; M. Saleh and H. Sourouzzian, *The Egyptian Museum Cairo* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1987), no. 66.

²² H. Altenmüller and A. M. Moussa, “Die Inschrift Amenemhets II. aus dem Ptah-Tempel von

a description of a cult statue of Ramesses VI made “of good *nib*-wood and persea wood, the torso colored and all of its limbs of faience like real red jasper, and his kilt of hammered(?) yellow gold; its crown of lapis lazuli, adorned with serpents of every color; the uraeus on his head of sixfold alloy inlaid with real stones; its sandals of sixfold alloy.”²³

Today, there is too little evidence for us to be certain exactly how cult statues were constructed, what they looked like, or whether they were all made the same way. Some may have been solid cast metal with or without inlays, while others would have been made of wood or built round a wooden core, probably with fittings in other materials. Perhaps there was a difference in materials and construction between the main cult statues of a temple and the portable ones.

What does come across from the texts is that cult statues were made of materials that were highly valued by the Egyptians. However, there was more to these materials than their value alone. Just as the form of the statue had to reflect the “exact shape” of the deity, so the materials used had to be appropriate for a deity’s body. The significance of gold, silver and lapis lazuli is made clear through texts, which tell us that the bones of deities were of silver, their flesh of gold, and their hair of lapis lazuli.²⁴ Further, these materials had cosmic associations: silver with the moon, gold with the sun, and lapis lazuli both with the night sky and the primordial waters of chaos, out of which the creator god emerged.²⁵

Traditionally, a cult statue was housed in a shrine within the sanctuary that was situated to the back of the temple (fig. 1.2). We know most about temples from the New Kingdom on, when temples of stone were built to replace Old and Middle Kingdom buildings constructed mostly of mudbrick. What follows, then, is based on temples dating from the New Kingdom to the Ptolemaic period.

The typical temple was situated within a mudbrick enclosure wall, which marked off the temple area from the profane world outside. Between

Memphis. Ein Vorbericht,” *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 18 (1991): 18–19. My thanks to John Baines for this reference.

²³ A. G. McDowell, *Village Life in Ancient Egypt: Laundry Lists and Love Songs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 94–95 n. 64.

²⁴ M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2 (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1976), 198; A. Barucq and F. Daumas, *Hymnes et prières de l’Égypte ancienne* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1980), 329–30; Hornung, *Conceptions of God*, 134; C. Leitz, *Magical and Medical Papyri of the New Kingdom* (Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum 6; London: British Museum Press, 1999), 36, IV, 8–9.

²⁵ S. Aufrère, *L’univers minéral dans la pensée égyptienne*, vols. 1 and 2 (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1991).

this wall and the temple proper were store rooms, scribal offices, and priests' houses, relating to the administration of the temple, and also the sacred lake where temple personnel who had access to the inner parts of the temple were purified before entering the building. The temple proper, built of stone, had a rectangular plan with the long axis usually oriented west–east or east–west, depending on which side of the Nile it was situated, since the temple entrance was always on the side nearest the river.

The temple was protected at the front by a huge pylon gateway that led into an open court. From there one passed into the covered area of the temple—first into the hypostyle hall, and beyond that to the sanctuary where the shrine containing the cult

statue stood. Only ritually purified humans, that is, the king and priests, would have had access to the inner parts of the temple and come into contact with the cult statue. The temple served to contain and protect the divine entity manifest in the cult statue and to keep the sacred and profane apart. From the human point of view, one moved from the profane world into the temple precinct and then through the temple from the pylon to the sanctuary, penetrating increasingly sacred space, which was marked by passing through a series of doorways lying along the temple axis.

The divine viewpoint was reversed. For the deity, the shrine in the sanctuary was the entrance into the temple. The deity came from outside the human realm to manifest in the cult statue. The doors of the shrine were called *ꜥwj pt* “the doors of heaven.” Practically, these had to open outwards into the temple and not inwards into the shrine, but surviving examples show that the inside of these doors actually faced into the temple and not into the interior of the shrine. Egyptian doors were made with horizontal battens across the inner side. On shrine doors, the battens are placed on the temple side of the door, suggesting that for the deity, the shrine was outside and the temple inside, so that when the doors are opened for the performance

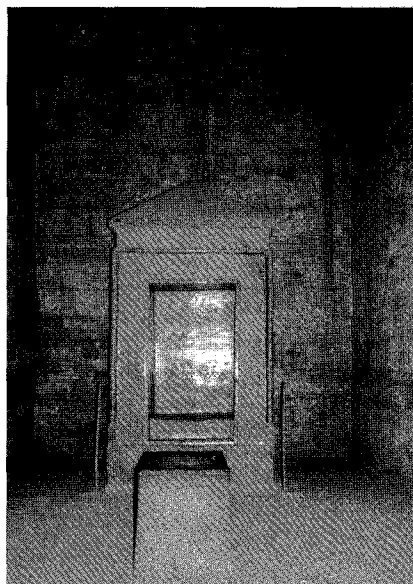


Fig. 1.2. Shrine for the cult statue of Horus, dedicated by Nectanebo II, in the sanctuary of the temple of Horus at Edfu. Photo by the author.

of ritual, the deity coming from beyond the human realm enters the temple, his or her earthly home.²⁶ Thus the deity would progress through the temple in the opposite direction to that of the priests. This is reflected in the figures depicted on temple walls. Those of the deity are oriented to face out from the interior, while those of the king face inwards from the exterior.

The cult statue formed the focal point for the daily temple ritual.²⁷ Reduced to its basic form, the ritual woke or summoned the deity, when the priest broke the seal on the shrine doors and opened them. The statue, as the deity's body, was then washed, given food and drink, clothed and anointed, after which it was replaced in its shrines and the doors resealed. These seemingly mundane actions of tending the deity in his cult statue were raised to a cosmic and effective level by the ritual actions and recitations of the priest. For instance, when the priest entered the sanctuary, which was the darkest part of the temple, he lit a torch so that he could see. On a cosmic level, the light dispelled the enemies of the sun god, Re, who were embodied in the darkness and sought to overwhelm the god and prevent him from reaching the day sky at dawn. The priest then burned incense, an important part of most ritual activities, perhaps because deities and the dead were believed to be attracted by the smell. On an effective level, however, the word for incense, *snṯr*, means "to make divine," from the root *nṯr* "a deity." Incense, thus, had the power "to make divine," that is, to effect the manifestation of the deity in the statue.

The temple itself, the setting for the ritual performance, formed an image of the cosmos, both at the moment when the created world came into being, and at night when it was sunk into darkness in the absence of the sun. The ritual taking place at sunrise enacted the initial moment of creation and the first sunrise, and the daily renewal of creation by the sun god at his rising. The pillars of the hypostyle hall were given the form of marsh plants, so that this part of the temple became an image of the primordial swampy waters of chaos out of which the mound of creation arose. The mound itself was represented by the sanctuary, which had the highest floor level in the temple, and by the raised shrine containing the cult statue. Every night the sun god passed through the waters of chaos, which surrounded the created world and interpenetrated the underworld, and was rejuvenated by the creative potential of the waters. The great court, open to the sky and the sun, together with the pylon gateway representing the horizon, became

²⁶ H. G. Fischer, *Varia Nova* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), 91–98.

²⁷ H. te Velde, "Theology, Priests and Worship in Ancient Egypt," *CANE* 3:1741–45; S. Sauneron, *The Priests of Ancient Egypt*, trans. D. Lorton (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 74–91.

the place of the first sunrise at creation and of the daily rebirth of the sun through which the created cosmos was renewed.²⁸

The awakening or summoning of the deity in the sanctuary at sunrise was therefore reenacting the coming into being of the creator god on the mound of creation, when he created the ordered cosmos. At the same time, it acted out the daily rising of the sun, which took place simultaneously with the ritual, so that the opening of the doors of heaven in the shrine corresponded to the opening of the celestial doors of heaven through which the sun passed from the underworld into the day sky. Finally, after the evening ritual and the setting of the sun, the temple returned to its pre-creation state, and to a state of night, while the sun passed through the underworld.

In the context of the effectiveness of the temple ritual on a cosmic level, therefore, the deity manifest in the cult statue was identified with the creator god and the sun god, so that the ritual simultaneously enacted and drew on the power of the first occasion—the original creation—and on its daily renewal through the rebirth of the sun. To complete this effectiveness, the deity was also the cosmic ruler who maintained the cyclically renewed universe and ensured its continued existence in the face of the uncreated forces of chaos, which lurked around the edges of the created world, and which continually threatened to undo the work of the creator god.²⁹

Deities were not, however, confined to the sanctuary of their temples, because during festivals their statues, accompanied by priests, musicians, singers, and dancers, were processed out of the sanctuary and frequently out of the temple.³⁰ Sometimes the procession was part of a ritual drama, as at the Festival of Osiris at Abydos, or the processed deity could be taken to another temple to visit the deity there, as when Hathor left her temple at Dendera to visit Horus at Edfu. During these processions, the divine statue was, in most cases, carried in a sacred boat mounted on poles (fig.

²⁸ B. E. Shafer, "Temples, Priests, and Rituals: An Overview," in *Temples of Ancient Egypt*, ed. B. E. Shafer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 1–30.

²⁹ D. O'Connor, "Egyptian Architecture," in *Searching for Ancient Egypt: Art, Architecture and Artifacts from the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology*, ed. D. P. Silverman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 155–61.

³⁰ H. Altenmüller, "Feste," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, vol. 2 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), 171–91; Shafer, *Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 25–28; Bell, "New Kingdom 'Divine' Temples," 157–76; R. Bjerre Finnestad, "Temples of the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods: Ancient Traditions in New Contexts," in *Temples of Ancient Egypt*, ed. B. E. Shafer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 220–26.

³¹ W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Koptos* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1896), pl. 19 top; P. Lacau and H. Chevrier, *Une chapelle d'Hatshepsout à Karnak*, vol. 2 (Paris: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1979), pls. 7, 9 and 20; Epigraphic Survey, *The Festival Procession of Opet in the Colonnade Hall* (Reliefs and Inscriptions at Luxor Temple 1; Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1994), pls. 4, 17, 35, 55, 68, 100.

1.3).³¹ The statue remained hidden and protected in a cloth-draped shrine placed like a cabin on the deck of the sacred boat, but the same precious materials that were used to make the concealed body of the deity were used to make the visible boat and shrine containing the deity.³² The presence of the manifest deity within the shrine was marked by the semicircular fans that surrounded the boat.³³ The identity of the deity within was displayed by the figureheads at the prow and stern of the boat, for instance, a ram's head for Amun, a female head wearing the double crown for Mut, and a falcon's head for Khonsu.

Cult statues in the form of a male ithyphallic figure representing the gods Min or Amun-Re (*Kamutef*) were openly displayed in procession,³⁴ their aggressive, intimidating attitude of raised open hand and erect phallus being in itself apotropaic.³⁵ Similarly, in scenes showing processions of statues representing the deified king, Amenhotep I, the image was not hidden within a shrine, but carried openly.³⁶

It is often assumed that the cult statue and processional statue were the same. However, it is more likely that they were separate images.³⁷ This makes sense when one considers that some festivals lasted a number of days. If the cult statue in the sanctuary had left the temple, then the daily ritual could not have been performed and the temple would in effect have ceased to function. It seems likely, then, that one must distinguish between the main cult statue of a deity and processional cult statues, which left the temple.

During processions any deity could be consulted as an oracle.³⁸ At Thebes, the most common deity who gave oracles was Amun-Re, but in the artists' village of Deir el-Medina on the Theban west bank, the main

³² M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 1 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1973), 124; idem, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2, 45. For color depictions of sacred boats, see plates 7 (vol. 1) and 11 (vol. 2) in A. M. Calverley and M. F. Broome, *The Temple of King Sethos I at Abydos*, vols. 1 and 2 (London and Chicago: Egypt Exploration Society and University of Chicago Press, 1933–35).

³³ L. Bell, "Aspects of the Cult of the Deified Tutankhamun," in *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar*, vol. 1, ed. P. Posener Kriéger (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1985), 31–59.

³⁴ E.g., Epigraphic Survey, *Festival Scenes of Ramses III* (Medinet Habu 4; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), pls. 201–2, 209, 210C, 211–12, 216–17.

³⁵ J. Ogden, "Some Notes on the Iconography of the God Min," *Bulletin of the Egyptian Seminar* 7 (1985/6): 29–41.

³⁶ J. Černý, "Le culte d'Amenophis Ier chez les ouvriers de la nécropole thébaine," *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 27 (1927): figs. 13–15.

³⁷ J.-M. Kruchten, "Oracles," *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2:609. A similar distinction is made in Hindu temples, C. J. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 58.

³⁸ For oracles, see J. Černý, "Egyptian Oracles," in *A Saite Oracle Papyrus from Thebes*, ed. R. A.

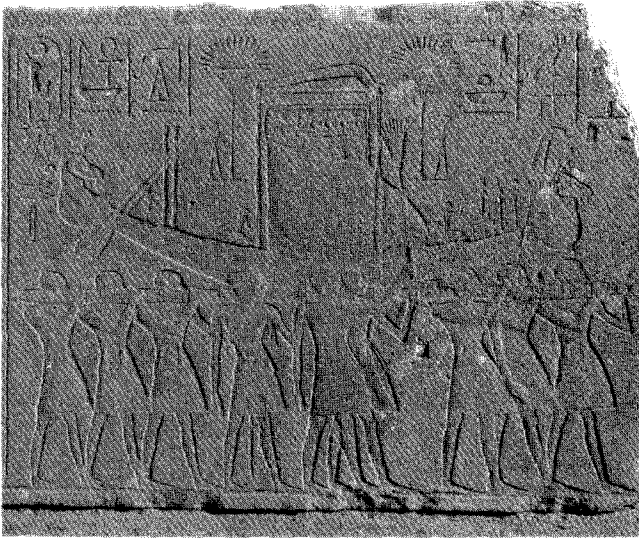


Fig. 1.3. Depiction of the sacred boat of Amun carried in procession by priests during the opet-festival, when the statue of the god was taken from the temple of Karnak to the temple of Luxor. From Hatshepsut's dismantled shrine for the sacred boat of Amun at Karnak. Photo by the author.

oracle was the patron god of the village, the deified Amenhotep I.³⁹ Oracles ranged over a wide variety of concerns and contexts. They could legitimate a king's rule or appoint an official to office, but they could also be requested by people much lower down the social scale whose questions were of local or individual concern only.⁴⁰

Oracles could be given in several ways. The deity could pick an individual out of a group by stopping the sacred boat in front of the relevant person—perhaps the perpetrator of some crime or the desired appointee for an office. A question could be put to the deity who would respond by moving the boat forwards or backwards to give an affirmative or negative answer respectively. Two statements could be placed before the deity, one the opposite of the other, and the god would choose between them by moving the boat toward one of them.

Parker (Providence: Brown University Press, 1962), 35–48; A. G. McDowell, *Jurisdiction in the Workmen's Community of Deir el-Medīna* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1990), 107–41; M. Römer, *Gottes- und Priesterherrschaft in Ägypten am Ende des Neuen Reiches* (Ägypten und Altes Testament 21; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1994); Kruchten, "Oracles," 609–12.

³⁹ For the cult of this god, see Černý, "Le culte d'Amenophis Ier," 159–97.

⁴⁰ Černý, "Egyptian Oracles," 46; McDowell, *Jurisdiction*, 107–8.

How the movements of the boat that encoded the responses of the deities actually worked is unclear. Earlier Egyptologists often assumed that it was all rigged with the boat being deliberately manipulated by the priests carrying it to get the desired result,⁴¹ but this is surely too simplistic. The use of divine oracles lasted for at least a thousand years and it is hard to believe that the institution could have maintained any authority if everyone believed that it was rigged. This is not to argue that oracles were never manipulated, but that for the system to work, there had to be a fundamental belief in the truth of the oracle.

To sum up, one may say that a cult statue in ancient Egypt provided a physical body for a deity, which gave that deity a fixed location within the human world where the divine cult and ritual activities for the deity could be focused. The statue was housed in the interior of the temple within the sanctuary, to which ordinary human access was severely restricted. The daily temple rituals were performed by the king and purified priests before the god manifest in the statue in order to recreate and maintain the ordered cosmos that the creator god had originally brought into being. Deities could also leave their temples manifest in their processional statues, when the passage of the divine boat, although in most cases not the actual image, could be witnessed by a much greater number of people. During processions, deities could actively intervene in human affairs and make pronouncements and judgments on a whole range of matters that were presented to them. Thus, people who could never hope to enter the inner parts of a temple could still have contact with the temples' deities. Even though, in most cases, deities remained unseen in procession, their divine presence was marked by the semicircular fans that surrounded the boat and the ritual activities of the accompanying priests, while the costly material of the boat itself—gold, silver and precious stones—reflected and recalled the materials used to make the physical body of the deity carried within it. The deity's journey outside the temple was, however, only a temporary one, and the god or goddess always returned to the temple at the end of the procession. Even so, the temple itself was not the true home of the deity, who ultimately dwelt outside the human world and the realm of human experience. The building simply provided a protected location for the cult statue where the deity could be induced to manifest in this world. Here, face to face, deities and human beings were able to interact through ritual performance and so maintain the ordered cosmos in which both deities and humans lived.

⁴¹ A. H. Gardiner, "The Dakhleh Stela," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 19 (1933): 28; J. Barns, "The Nevill Papyrus: A Late Ramesside Letter to an Oracle," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 35 (1949): 69.

Chapter Two

A Statue for the Deity: Cult Images in Hittite Anatolia

Billie Jean Collins

In the state religion of the Hittites, the cult statue was the central focus of the temple building and the main preoccupation of its staff and personnel.¹ The worship of the gods of the official pantheon of the Hittites was centered on these divine images and the deity in its temple provided a focal point for all religious activity (fig. 2.1). The Hittite texts rarely discuss the day-to-day care of the anthropomorphic divine images, but there is little reason to suppose that they were treated any differently than those in Mesopotamia.² They were clothed, fed, bathed (usually prior to a ritual service), entertained, and their festivals were celebrated according to a regular calendar. The population at large would not have had the opportunity to glimpse the god except on those occasions when the deities were brought out of their temples, sometimes in grand procession, for the performance of certain festival ceremonies. For example, a celebration apparently similar to the *akitu* or New Year's Festival in Babylon included a procession in which the deity was transported to a sacred location outside of the city where feasting and various entertainments were organized for it.³

But the anthropomorphic statues in their temples were only one possible manifestation of the divine. The peoples of Anatolia enjoyed a long tradi-

¹ I am grateful to Jerry Cooper for his advice with respect to the Mesopotamian evidence for cult statues. I am also, as ever, deeply indebted to the editors of the Chicago Hittite Dictionary, Harry A. Hoffner, Jr. and Theo van den Hout for their generosity in allowing me access to the files of the Dictionary office, and to Gary M. Beckman for offering comments on an early draft of this paper.

² For Mesopotamia, see E. Matsushima, "Divine Statues in Ancient Mesopotamia: Their Fashioning and Clothing and Their Interaction with the Society," in *Official Cult and Popular Religion in the Ancient Near East*, ed. E. Matsushima (Heidelberg: Winter, 1993), 209–19.

³ O. R. Gurney, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 40–41; I. Singer, "The *huwaši* of the Storm-God in Hattuša," in *IX. Türk Tarih Kongresi (Ankara, 21–25 Eylül 1981). Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler I*, ed. E. Akurgal et al. (Türk Tarih Kurumu Kongresi Yayınları IX/9; Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1986), 252.



Fig. 2.1. One of the cellas of the Great Temple at Hattusa. Photo by the author.

tion of worshipping in open cult places outside the town⁴ and of venerating their gods in a variety of non-anthropomorphic forms. The lively material aniconism⁵ of the Hittites has been a topic of some considerable interest for Hittitologists,⁶ although the relationship of these divine images to theriomorphic representations and anthropomorphic statues remains only poorly understood. Even a brief consideration of the subject of cult images brings several questions into focus. What is the evidence that the Hittites distinguished conceptually between cultic and non-cultic images of the divine in the first place? By what means did an image make the transformation from object to deity? Did the Hittites distinguish between a deity and its image?

⁴ K. Bittel, "Hittite Temples and High Places in Anatolia and North Syria," in *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times*, ed. A. Biran (Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology of Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion, 1981), 63–73.

⁵ In this paper I use the distinction adopted by Mettinger between material aniconism and empty space aniconism, the former having to do with aniconic symbols (that is, images that are neither anthropomorphic nor theriomorphic), the latter with sacred emptiness: See T. N. D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995), 19.

⁶ Studies include: H. G. Güterbock, "Hethitische Götterdarstellungen und Götternamen," *Belleten* 7/26 (1943): 295–317; idem, "Review of C. G. von Brandenstein, *Hethitische Götter nach Bildbeschreibungen in Keilschrifttexten*," *Orientalia* 32 (1946): 482–96; idem, "Hethitische Götterbilder und Kultobjekte," in *Beiträge zur Altertumskunde Kleinasiens: Festschrift für Kurt Bittel*, ed. R. M. Boehmer and H. Hauptmann (Mainz: von Zabern, 1983), 203–17; L. Jakob-Rost, "Zu den he-

How did the plethora of options play itself out in the cult—for example, who decided what form a deity would take? And, along more practical lines of inquiry, when were anthropomorphic statues introduced and how did their introduction affect the cult?

In this article, I use “cult statue” to refer specifically to anthropomorphic divine representations, while the term “cult symbol” is employed for non-anthropomorphic symbolic images, but only where they are the objects of special attention in the performance of religious ritual. Both of these qualify as “cult images” and are distinguished from “cult objects,” which I use to identify those objects that play a role in the cult but are not demonstrably representations, or embodiments, of a deity.

The Evidence for Cult Statues

In the performance of cultic activities, the Hittite king was the titular leader who served the gods as their chief priest and was responsible for maintaining the state cult. His yearly and even daily schedule was dictated by his religious responsibilities, not only to the cult at his capital in Hattusa, but also to the local sanctuaries throughout the heart of his realm. No Hittite king took his religious duties more seriously than the late-thirteenth-century ruler, Tudhaliya IV, and we are largely indebted to him for what we know about the statues themselves because his reports on the restoration of the cultic installations in towns and villages within his realm have been preserved in the archives at Hattusa.⁷ Many of these reports are inventories of the furniture in the local temple or shrine, including descriptions of the

thitischen Bildbeschreibungen (I. Teil),” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 8 (1963): 161–217; idem, “Zu den hethitischen Bildbeschreibungen (II. Teil),” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 9 (1963): 175–239; A. Archi, “Fêtes de printemps et d’automne et réintégration rituelle d’images de culte dans l’Anatolie Hittite,” *Ugarit Forschungen* 5 (1973): 7–27; M. Popko, *Kultobjekte in der hethitischen Religion* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1978); idem, “Anikonische Götterdarstellungen in der altanatolischen Religion,” in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. Quaegebeur (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 55; Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 319–27; M. N. van Loon, *Anatolia in the Second Millennium B.C.* (Iconography of Religions XV, 12; Leiden: Brill, 1985); P. Taracha, “Göttertiere und Kultfassaden: Ein Beitrag zur Interpretation hethitischer Kultdarstellungen,” *Altorientalische Forschungen* 14 (1987): 263–73; M. Hutter, “Kultstelen und Baityloi. Die Ausstrahlung eines syrischen religiösen Phänomens nach Kleinasien und Israel,” in *Religionsgeschichtliche Beziehungen zwischen Kleinasien, Nordsyrien und dem Alten Testament. Internationales Symposium Hamburg 17.–21. März 1990*, ed. B. Janowski, K. Koch, and G. Wilhelm (OBO 129; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 87–108.

⁷ Studies include: C. G. von Brandenstein, *Hethitische Götter nach Bildbeschreibungen in Keilschrifttexten* (Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Ägyptischen Gesellschaft 46/2; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1943); C. Carter, “Hittite Cult Inventories” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1962); Jakob-Rost,

god's image, while others describe the restoration of the Spring and Autumn Festivals.⁸ In both cases, the king was acting to fulfill a vow made to the Sun Goddess of Arinna in a prayer.⁹

The inventories describe the divine images in some detail. For example, the image of Iyaya in the city of Lapana is described as "one statue of wood, of a woman seated, veiled, of one *šekan*, its head inlaid with gold. The body and the throne (are) inla[id] with tin. Two wooden sheep covered with tin are seated beneath the goddess, to the right and left. One eagle inlaid with tin, two copper scepters, two cups of bronze. Utensils of the goddess are present. She has a new temple; she has a priest; the groom (is) a holdover."¹⁰ And the war god (^dZABABA) is present in the form of "a statue (of) silver (represented as) a man [standing:] In his right hand he holds a mace, in his left[hand] he holds a shield. Beneath him [stands] a li[on]. Beneath the lion is a base inlaid in silver."¹¹

The cult inventories provide many details about local cults and the deities worshiped in them. We learn for example that cult statues measured from one to two *šekan* in height (22 to 44 cm).¹² Thus they were not life-sized,

"Zu den hethitischen Bildbeschreibungen (I. Teil)"; idem, "Zu den hethitischen Bildbeschreibungen (II. Teil)"; E. Laroche, "La réforme religieuse du roi Tudhaliya IV et sa signification politique," in *Les Syncrétismes dans les religions de l'antiquité*, ed. F. Dunand and P. Lévêque (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 87–95; A. Archi, "Ein hethitischer Text über die Reorganisation des Kultes," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 7 (1980): 143–57; P. H. J. Houwink ten Cate, "The Hittite Storm God: His Role and His Rule According to Hittite Cuneiform Sources," in *Natural Phenomena: Their Meaning, Depiction and Description in the Ancient Near East*, ed. D. J. W. Meijer (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1992), 83–148; J. Hazenbos, *The Organization of the Anatolian Local Cults During the Thirteenth Century B.C.: An Appraisal of the Hittite Cult Inventories* (Cuneiform Monographs 21; Leiden: Brill, 2003).

⁸ Houwink ten Cate, "The Hittite Storm God," 103 with n. 42, 108.

⁹ *KBo* 12.58 + *KBo* 13.162 obv. 2–11 (CTH 385.9); trans. Hazenbos, *The Organization of the Anatolian Local Cults*, 9–10. Tudhaliya was not the first or only Hittite king to concern himself with the status of the sanctuaries. For example, Muwatalli II promises such a report in a prayer to the assembly of gods (*KUB* 6.45 i 20–24). The "Instructions to the Chief of the Border Guard" also make clear that the state of the local sanctuaries is his responsibility: "Furthermore the chief of the border guard is to make a record of the implements of the deity and send it (the list) to His Majesty" (*KUB* 13.2 ii 42–43).

¹⁰ URU¹⁰La-pa-na dJ-y[a]-ya-aš DINGIR-LIM-tar 1 ALAM GIŠ MUNUS-TI TUŠ-an :ħu-u-pí-ta-a-u-wa-an-za ŠA 1 [SIG.Ú] SAG.DU.ZU GUŠKIN GAR.RA [N]Í.TE-eš-ma GIŠDAG-iš-ša NAGGA GA[R.RA] 2 UDU.KUR.RA GIŠ NAGGA ħa-liš-ši-ya-an A-NA DINGIR-LIM GAM-an ZAG-na-za GÜB-la-<za> TUŠ-an-zi 1 TI₈.MUŠEN NAGGA GAR.RA 2 URUDU¹⁰PA 2 GAL ZABAR Ú-NU-UT DINGIR-LIM Í.GÁL-iš É.DINGIR-LIM GIBIL-ši LÚ SANGA-ši LÚ¹⁰IŠ an-na-al-liš (*KUB* 38.1 iv 1–7, edited by von Brandenstein, *Hethitische Götter nach Bildbeschreibungen*, 14–15; Jakob-Rost, "Zu den hethitischen Bildbeschreibungen [I. Teil]," 181).

¹¹ dZA-BA₄-BA₄ ALAM KÜ.BABBAR LÚ [GUB-an-za] ZAG-za ŠU-za GIŠTUKUL ħar-zi GÜ[B-za ŠU-za] A-RI-TUM ħar-zi GAM-ŠU UR.M[AĤ] GUB-ri] GAM UR.MAĤ pal-za-ħa-aš KÜ.BABBAR GAR.RA] (*KUB* 38.2 ii 17'–20', edited by Jakob-Rost, "Zu den hethitischen Bildbeschreibungen [II. Teil]," 176).

¹² Gurney, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion*, 26.

but relatively small—more statuette than statue. This would certainly have been convenient for the temple associates whose job it was to transport them to various localities for the celebration of the cult. It would also have been economical, if this was a consideration, as the smaller statues absorbed fewer material resources. A number of examples of statuettes in this size range have been found.¹³ One such from Amasya is projected to have been some 34 cm tall when intact.¹⁴ A bronze statue with an iron core was found in the vicinity of Ahurhisar (in a region near the northern border of Arzawa in Hittite times) in 1990 (fig. 2.2). As preserved (its legs are missing), it measures 35.1 cm, and was approximately 47–50 cm when complete, making it the largest of this type yet found.¹⁵ Traces of gold overlay further suggest that it was a precious object.¹⁶ A small statuette of a seated female found within a cultic deposit at Alaca Höyük is also likely to have been a cult statue.¹⁷ Were it not for the cult inventories, statuettes such as these—even when found in archaeological contexts suggesting cultic activity—might well have gone unrecognized as possible cult images.

Despite the measurements provided in the inventories, scenes of cultic worship in relief seem to depict life-sized statues, as in an orthostat relief from Malatya, which shows a king pouring a libation to the Storm God (fig. 2.3). Such iconographic conventions, however, may not be intended to convey true-to-life scenes of worship. Thus, while the god in the picture may have been life-sized, the statue actually residing in the temple might nevertheless be quite small. On the other hand, Bittel has pointed out that the size of the bases in the excavated temples at Hattusa demonstrates that, at least at the Hittite capital, if not in all the major religious centers of Hit-

¹³ S. Alp, "Eine hethitische Bronzestatue und andere Funde aus Zara bei Amasya," *Anatolia* 6 (1961/62): 217–43; K. Bittel, "Einige Kapitel zur hethitischen Archäologie," in *Neuere Hethiterforschung*, ed. G. Walser (Historia, Einzelschriften 7, Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1964), 123–30.

¹⁴ Alp, "Eine hethitische Bronzestatue," pl. XXIV.

¹⁵ A. İlaşlı, "A Hittite Statue Found in the Area of Ahurhisar," in *Aspects of Art and Iconography: Anatolia and its Neighbors: Studies in Honor of Nimet Özgüç*, ed. M. Mellink, E. Porada, and T. Özgüç (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1993), 301–8.

¹⁶ The statue was found on the top of a hill scattered with rocks that may be the remains of destroyed buildings and other signs of human activity, including rock bowls. Like the statue from Amasya (see Alp, "Eine hethitische Bronzestatue," 227), this one too had been mutilated in antiquity (see İlaşlı, "A Hittite Statue Found in the Area of Ahurhisar," 301).

¹⁷ The statuette was found together with a composite statuette of a bull, a pair of figurines in the form of reclining bulls, and a relief plaque with a design of bullmen and winged disk, all of metal; H. Z. Koşay, *Les Fouilles d'Alaca Höyük: Rapport préliminaire sur les travaux en 1937–1939* (Türk Tarih Kurumu Kongresi Yayınları V/5; Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1951), 176, with pl. 67, fig. 1b. See N. W. Leinwand, "Archaeological Evidence for Hittite Cult Statuary," *American Journal of Archaeology* 89 (1985): 338–39, for a cultic interpretation of the find.

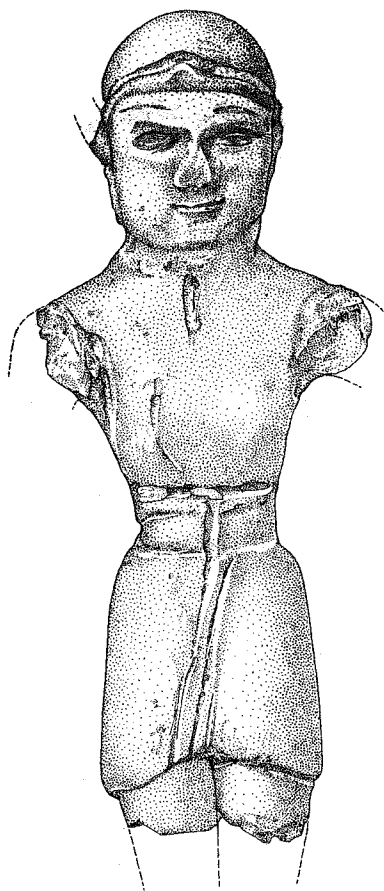


Fig. 2.2. Bronze statue found in the vicinity of Ahurhisar. Drawing from A. İlaslı, "A Hittite Statue Found in the Area of Ahurhisar," fig. 1.

tite Anatolia, the cult images must have been life-sized.¹⁸ No inventories for the temples of the Hittite capital have survived, if they were ever taken, but it is probable that these most wealthy temples housed life-sized statues, probably of precious metal.¹⁹ There is, however, both archaeological and textual evidence of life-sized statues of kings. Queen Puduhepa in a prayer to the goddess Lelwani vows to make for her "a statue of Hattusili as big as Hattusili, its head, hands and feet of gold" if she will preserve his health.²⁰ And the life-sized feet of the statue of Tudhaliya IV that had graced the north end of Chamber B at Yazılıkaya provide archaeological corroboration of this (fig. 2.4). Whether such life-sized royal statues suggest the existence of life-sized divine statues is impossible to say with certainty as no life-sized divine statues have been found.

Cultic and Non-Cultic Statues

The archaeological context notwithstanding, the question that troubles any discussion of cult statues in antiquity, is how do we know when a statue was cultic in use and design? More importantly, how did the Hittites make this

distinction, if indeed they made it at all? Is it even correct to apply the term cult statue? The location of the statue in a temple, for example, is not indicative, since the Hittite texts reveal that divine images received ritual attention both within and without identifiable sacred enclosures and because it is at

¹⁸ Bittel, "Einige Kapitel zur hethitischen Archäologie," 126.

¹⁹ Gurney, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion*, 26.

²⁰ A. Goetze, "Hittite Prayers," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. J. B. Pritchard, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 394.



Fig. 2.3. Relief from Malatya showing a king pouring a libation before a seated deity. From E. Akurgal, The Art of the Hittites (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), fig. 105.

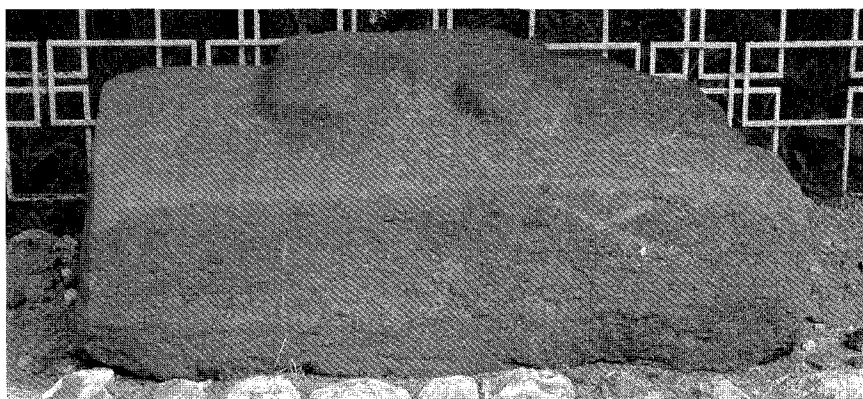


Fig. 2.4. Base of a life-sized statue of Tudhaliya IV from Yazılıkaya. Photo by the author.

least conceivable that divine statues could have resided in the cultic precinct without being the actual cult image. If having their origin in religious rather than artistic sensibility (assuming the two are separable) is a criterion, we are not helped by the fact that the motive for the creation of a statue is rarely discernable. Form too is of little help, since anthropomorphic cult images were not limited to figures in the round, but could include images in relief on cult objects: “(The chief of the palace attendants) turns the side of the hammer on which the Storm God is depicted toward the king.”²¹ Nomen-

²¹ [nu-uš]-ša-an A-NA NÍG.G[(UL)] ku-e-ez pé-e-da-az [] ^dU an-da i-ya-an-za [] na-an LUGAL-i an-da na-a-[i] (KBo 10.24 iv 1–4 w. dupl. KUB 20.91:6’–7’). The Hittite texts are silent with respect to a possible cultic role for the monumental rock reliefs and they are therefore of necessity excluded

clature is another possible criterion. But do the Hittite religious texts offer a term that suggests a conceptual distinction between images that are cultic and those that are ordinary? Before answering this question, it is necessary to review the Hittite lexicon for images.

Models of humans and animals of all sizes and materials were used for a wide array of purposes in Hittite religion. The Hittite texts use the term *ešri-* to encompass a range of manmade statues or statuettes that might be for either secular or religious use. *Ešri-* invariably refers to anthropomorphic representations and is the word used in most cases to refer to divine statues as well as statues of kings, including full-sized ones. But since cult statues were not necessarily life-sized and we know that *ešri-* could refer to divine statues, *ešri-* does not imply full-sized statues. The word *šena-* generally refers to smaller, but also exclusively anthropomorphic figurines or statuettes.²² *Šena-* are often manipulated in magic rituals and the word is best translated “effigy.” Effigies represent specific individuals, whether divine, demonic or human, and are in essence “terminals” connected to the individual entity.²³ Sometimes the effigy might be used as a substitute and thus *šena-* is occasionally translated “substitute,” but this is a secondary, derived meaning and is distinct from *tarpalleš*, which are living substitutes.²⁴ That the Sumerogram ALAM could stand for both *ešri-* and *šena-* complicates our grasp of the nuances of both words.²⁵ Like *šena-*, *ešri-* refers to an effigy used in magic in Allaiturahi’s ritual, but such usage is exceptional.²⁶ Conversely, on one occasion, *šena-* is used for cult images, but again this is unusual.²⁷

from this discussion. The raised bench beneath the reliefs at Yazılıkaya may or may not have been intended as a place for offerings made to the images of the deities depicted there (H. G. Güterbock, “Yazılıkaya: Apropos a New Interpretation,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 34/4 [1975]: 277).

²² I am aware of only one possible exception. In *KUB* 36.83 iv 9–10 both “a frog, a clay statuette of a puppy” and “a frog, a clay statuette, a puppy” are possible interpretations according to the *CHD* (s.v. *šena-*). I prefer the latter possibility (B. J. Collins, “The Representation of Wild Animals in Hittite Texts,” [Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1989], 230).

²³ J. N. Postgate, “Text and Figure in Ancient Mesopotamia: Match and Mismatch,” in *The Ancient Mind: Elements of Cognitive Archaeology*, ed. C. Renfrew and E. B. W. Zubrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 178. For example, in Hebattarakki’s Ritual, the practitioner makes effigies of two demons who are identified by name (Agalmati and Ānnamiluli) as the practitioner recites an incantation to break their malevolent hold on the patient (*KUB* 24.14 i 11–28).

²⁴ See also H. M. Kümmel, *Ersatzrituale für den hethitischen König* (Studien zu den Boghazköy-Texten 3; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1967), 22.

²⁵ Both *šena-* and *ešri-* are identified with Akk. *šalmu* in separate lexical lists (*KBo* 1.44 + *KBo* 13.1 iv 31 and *KUB* 3.94 ii 10 for *ešri-*; *KBo* 13.2 obv. 2 for *šena-*).

²⁶ *KUB* 24.13 ii 7–9 (J. Friedrich and A. Kammenhuber, eds., *Hethitisches Wörterbuch* [Heidelberg: Winter, 1975–], s.v. *ešri-*).

²⁷ *KUB* 27.15 i 5–8 (*CTH* 698).

The terms *tarpalli-* “substitute” and *nakkušši-* “carrier” may be applied both to humans and animals (always living, in contrast to *himma-*, see below) used in the particular context of rituals of substitution. Live animals and animal replicas both might be used as apotropaia, substitutes or carriers in ritual to deflect evil or impurity from the human patient. But as in Mesopotamia, an animal replica is never called a “figurine.”²⁸ Huwarlu’s ritual, for example, calls for the creation of a wax model of a puppy, which is referred to simply as the “wax puppy.”²⁹ The term *šena-* does not apply in such cases because the animal replica, and indeed the live animal, represents a generic class rather than any particular animal.³⁰ That is, animal figurines used in ritual are not effigies. The only Hittite word that might accurately apply to such models is *himma-*.

Himma-, usually translated “image,” means more specifically a model or replica and can refer to objects, animals (e.g., birds in the funerary rituals) and humans (e.g., the deceased). *Himma-*, therefore, is broader in meaning than *šena-*. *Ešri-*, *šena-* and *himma-* are used in tandem in the royal funerary rituals, presumably to refer to the image of the deceased. This is not contradictory since a statue(tte) (*ešri-*) could be used as either an effigy (*šena-*) or a replica (*himma-*).

Despite the ample terminology for the plastic arts, the lexicon does not provide a word that distinguishes an image purely based on a cultic function. For help we must look again to the cult inventories. In these texts, the divinity is typically referred to by the term *šuniyatar*, an abstract of the word for deity (*šuni-*) that is usually translated “divine image.” In the town of Lapana, for example, for the goddess “Iyaya, the *šuniyatar* is one statue of wood, of a woman”³¹ Where describing cult statues, as in the inventories, the reference is clearly to the statue as a receptacle for the deity’s essence, its godhead. The application of the word *šuniyatar* to a representation implies that, anthropomorphic or otherwise, the representation was imbued with the divine essence, i.e., that the deity was present. *Šuniyatar*, then, is not simply the “divine image,” but applies to the fully fused statue plus godhead. In other words, it is the cult image—the extra-physical reference to whatever object hosted the divine presence.

What the texts do not tell us is whether all divine statues were used in religious activity and if they were not, whether simply by virtue of harbor-

²⁸ Postgate, “Text and Figure in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 178.

²⁹ *KBo* 4.2 ii 14 (*CTH* 398).

³⁰ Postgate, “Text and Figure in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 179.

³¹ *KUB* 38.1 iv 1–2 (see note 10).

ing the potential for such use they were inherently considered to house the godhead. Or could a statue be cultic only if it underwent the appropriate rites?³² Even if we accept that there is a distinction between statues that were imbued with the divine presence and those that were mere representations of the deity, can a statue that is not a “cult statue” still be considered “cultic” and used in religious ceremony? Or, more broadly, did the Hittites have such a thing as a “secular” image of a deity?

Cult Objects and Symbolic Representations

So far we have focused on the cult statue, the anthropomorphic repository for the godhead. But the cult inventories use *šiuniyatar* equally for non-anthropomorphic cult images: “City of Tammeka: the *šiuniyatar* of the Storm God of the Army (and) Marduk are two silver *wakšur*-vessels, weighing two minas of silver.”³³ According to the texts, these symbolic representations—examples of Mettinger’s material aniconism—received attentions similar to those given to anthropomorphic images.

Besides the deity, present in the form of his image, a variety of objects and architectural elements resided within the sacred precinct. These objects and fixtures were deemed to be holy presumably because of their close association with, and proximity to, the deity. Cult objects may be defined as objects or items that play a role in a religious ceremony, including receiving offerings.³⁴ Although it is not easy to distinguish between symbolic representations of the deity and cult objects,³⁵ the two are distinct³⁶ because cult objects are not representations of the deity whose cultic precinct they share.

³² What about statues of the dead, specifically of the deceased kings, who became gods after death and received offerings befitting their new status, as in the case of Tudhaliya IV at Yazılıkaya? Notably, although *šiuniyatar* is applied to all varieties of divine cult images—anthropomorphic and symbolic—it is never demonstrably used in reference to a royal statue.

³³ URU Ta-ra-am-me-ka₄ dU KARAŠ dAMAR.UT[U] DINGIR-LIM-tar 2 wa-ak-šur KÙ.BABBAR KILÁ.BI 2 MA.NA KÙ.BABBAR (*KUB* 38.1 i 1–2, edited by Jakob-Rost, “Zu den hethitischen Bildbeschreibungen [I. Teil],” 178).

³⁴ G. J. Selz, “‘The Holy Drum, the Spear and the Harp’: Towards an Understanding of the Problems of Deification in Third Millennium Mesopotamia,” in *Sumerian Gods and Their Representations*, ed. I. L. Finkel and M. J. Geller (Groningen: Styx, 1997), 168.

³⁵ Ibid., 167–68; Popko, *Kultobjekte in der hethitischen Religion*, 137 (vis-à-vis *kurša*).

³⁶ W. G. Lambert, “Ancient Mesopotamian Gods: Superstition, Philosophy, Theology,” *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 207 (1990): 129. Cf. Selz (“‘The Holy Drum, the Spear and the Harp’,” 167–213), who argues to the contrary for Mesopotamia in the third millennium.

Cult Objects

Popko has organized Hittite cult objects into several categories.³⁷ The first of these comprises architectural elements, such as the temple itself, and includes the *hešti*-house and *tunnakeššar* “bedroom,” which were sometimes scenes of cultic activity. Fixed elements within the cultic precinct, including the wall (*kutt-*), door, door bolt (*hattalwaš taru*), throne (*ħalmašuit-*), window (*luttai-*) and altar (*ištanana-*) were also cult objects, some of these among the earliest attested. Movable cultic implements formed another category of cult object and included the offering table (^{GIŠ}BANŠUR), stool (*tapri-*), bed (*nathī-*), musical instruments, and various vessels, including pithoi (*ħarši[yalli]-*) and animal rhyta (*BIBRU*), used for offerings and libations. Finally, divine attributes also constituted a type of cult object. These include staffs (^{GIŠ}PA), weapons, chariots, spindles, and a part of the divine costume (e.g., *ulihi-*).

It is evident that some cult objects (e.g., *ħalmašuit-*, *ħarši-yalli-*, *kurša-*) could also function as cult images. But the presence or absence of the divine determinative in a cuneiform text is no basis for making a judgment as to the use of the object so modified. The scribal practice of placing a divine determinative next to the object term—a rare event in the earlier texts—is, in Popko’s view, likely to be a Hurrian influence on the cult given the tendency in Hurrian-derived texts to apply the determinative to various Hurrian terms.³⁸ Proximity to the deity and the center of the cult activity rendered objects holy, and the divine determinative—where it occurs—may indicate nothing more than this.

Nor is the receipt of offerings an indisputable signifier of divinity. Rather than representing the deity whose cult room they graced, or indeed another entity altogether, these cultic objects performed a messenger function.³⁹ In the case of sacrifices made, for example, to the wall of the cella, the recipient of the offering serves as a conduit to the deity. In the case of the *ulihi-* described below in the context of an induction ceremony for a new statue, the object stands in for the absent deity. Admittedly, to understand them as channels or messengers to the god without ascribing them an independent divinity requires a different way of imagining the divine, one that is wholly alien to our modern way of thinking.

There is no evidence as to whether Hittite cult objects were subjected to rites of vivification. But I suspect that it is the activation of the object

³⁷ Popko, *Kultobjekte in der hethitischen Religion*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 138.

³⁹ Selz, “‘The Holy Drum, the Spear and the Harp’,” 181.

wherein lies the difference between object and image. While a cult object might be the passive recipient of an offering, the cult image was activated through anointing and washing, whereupon it became an active participant in its own cult; it ate, drank, traveled from one cultic precinct to another and observed the entertainments prepared for it.

Symbolic and Theriomorphic Representations

Symbolic and theriomorphic images of the gods appear to have a long prehistory in Anatolia. Bulls, deer, and lions are the animals most commonly found with Anatolian deities and their prevalence in the cult and symbolic life of the Hittites has led to speculation about the theriomorphic tendencies of the early (pre-Hittite) inhabitants of Anatolia. The figures of these animals, sometimes in combination with other animals within an oval (solar?) design, adorn the graves of local notables at Alaca Höyük (fig. 2.5). Scholars generally accept a cultic interpretation of these standards, and the temptation to connect them in some way with the religious beliefs of later periods has proven irresistible. Some believe that the standards are representations of gods who in the Hittite period are associated with these animals: the bull is the Storm God, the deer is the Protective Deity, and the solar disks represent the Sun God(dess).⁴⁰

The cult inventories are the richest source of information about symbolic images in the Late Bronze Age and testify to the wide variety of available forms. There is no indication of how the form of the replacement image was selected, but Paskuwatti's ritual suggests that the divinity might have been consulted, perhaps by oracular inquiry, as to his or her preference.⁴¹ In these reports, the sun goddesses are most often represented by a sun disk, while mountain gods are often represented by an assortment of weapons—dag-

⁴⁰ So common is the series Storm God, Sun Goddess and Protective Deity in the cult inventories, writes Güterbock ("Hethitische Götterbilder und Kultobjekte," 217), that this lends weight to the possibility that the deer and bull rhyta and the seated goddess with child from the Schimmel Collection now in the Metropolitan Museum might have been found together.

⁴¹ "He will come and worship the goddess. In addition if she prefers a pithos, he will make her stand as a pithos. But if not, then he will make her stand as a *huwašši*-stone or he will make her (as) a statue" (*nu-za ú-iz-zi DINGIR-LUM i-e-zi nam-ma-aš-ši ma-a-an* ^{DUG}*har-ši-ya-al-li a-aš-šu na-an-za-an* ^{DUG}*har-ši-ya-al-li ti-it-ta-nu-zi ma-a-an Ū-UL-ma na-an-za* ^{NA}*hu-u-wa-ši ti-it-ta-nu-zi na-aš-ma-an-za ALAM-ma i-ya-zi*; *KUB* 7.5 iv 11–16, edited by H. A. Hoffner, Jr., "Paskuwatti's Ritual against Sexual Impotence [CTH 406]," *Aula orientalis* 5 [1987]: 276, 279). Sex too appears to have been determined by personal preference, at least in some cases: "If you, O god, are refusing the statue of a woman; if you, O god, are seeking the statue of a man, but you do not seek the statue of a woman, let the flesh oracle be favorable" (*ma-a-an-za DINGIR-LUM ALAM MUNUS-TI mar-ki-ya-[ši]* *DINGIR-LUM ALAM LÚ-pát ša-an-ḫe-eš-ki-ši ALAM MUNUS-TI-I-ma* ¹*Ū-UL ša-an-aḫ-ti nu* *SU.MEŠ SIG₅-ru*; *KUB* 50.89 iii 5'–7', edited in *CHD* L–N, s.v. *markiya*-).

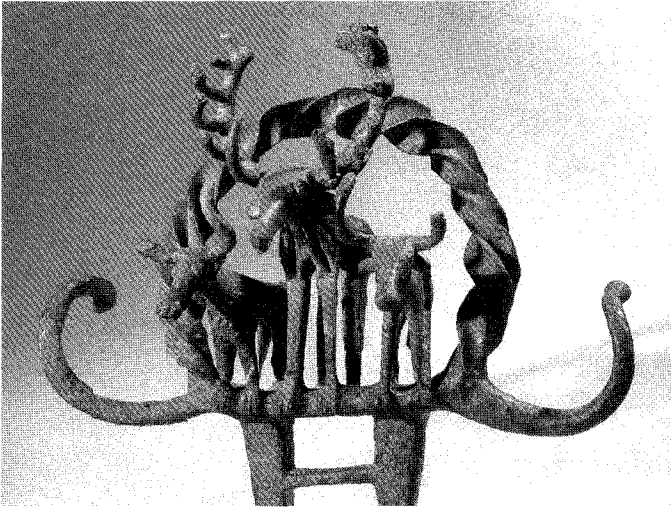


Fig. 2.5. Animal “standard” from Early Bronze Age Alaca Höyük. From K. Bittel, *Die Hethiter* (Munich: Beck, 1976), fig. 17.

gers, clubs or maces—or by various types of vessels. The war god in the city of Tarammeka is described as follows: “The divinity is a fist (rhyton) of silver weighing 20 shekels. Two large copper shields, one copper lance, three copper daggers, one copper spear, one club of bronze, one copper axe: the accoutrements of ZABABA are assembled. We built a new temple (with a) priest for him.”⁴²

The surviving iconography supports these accounts. The silver fist now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts offers a striking correspondence to the image just described (fig. 2.6).⁴³ Numerous animal-shaped rhyta have been recovered, including the exquisite examples in the Schimmel Collection that may have been used as divine representations. And the relief of the dagger god from Chamber B at Yazılıkaya is thought to depict an Underworld deity (fig. 2.7).

⁴² URU^UTa-ra-am-<me>-ka₄ dZA-BA₄-BA₄ DINGIR-LIM-tar 1 GEŠPÚ KÙ.BABBAR KILÁ.BI 20 GÍN.GÍN 2 URUDU^UA-RI-TUM GAL 1 URUDU I-MI-IT-TUM 3 URUDU GÍR 1 URUDU GÍŠŠUKUR 1 GÍŠTUKUL ZABAR 1 URUDU HA-AZ-ZI-IN-NU Ú-NU-UT ŠA dZA-BA₄-BA₄ ta-ru-up-ta É.DINGIR-LIM GIBIL-ši^{LU} SANGA DÜ-u-en (KUB 38.1 i 4–9, edited by von Brandenstein, *Hethitische Götter nach Bildbeschreibungen*, 10–11; Jakob-Rost, “Zu den hethitischen Bildbeschreibungen [I. Teil],” 178).

⁴³ See H. G. Güterbock and T. Kendall, “A Hittite Silver Vessel in the Form of a Fist,” in *The Ages of Homer: A Tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule*, ed. J. B. Carter and S. P. Morris (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 45–60.



Fig. 2.6. A silver vessel in the form of a fist.
Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Huwaši-. Some of the earliest and most prevalent divine symbols were the *huwaši*-stones.⁴⁴ These stelae were sometimes engraved with a relief or an inscription. For the most part they were located outside the town, often in a grove, near a spring or on a mountain. In short, they could be found in any location imbued with a sense of the sacred. *Huwaši*-s can also be found within the temples, sometimes in addition to a statue, sometimes in lieu of it. The comparison with biblical *maṣṣebôt* was made early⁴⁵ and discussion continues about the relationship between the two phenomena.⁴⁶

Huwaši-s were already central to Hittite religious practice by the beginning of the historic period,⁴⁷ and again, archaeology offers corroboration. One Empire period (ca. 1380–1200 B.C.E.) example of a *huwaši*- has been unearthed at Karahöyük (fig. 2.8). This stela was inscribed with Luwian hieroglyphs and a trough for offerings was set in front of it.⁴⁸

As is evident from the texts, the term *huwaši*- could refer to the stela itself and also encompass the open-air sanctuary in which the stela was located.⁴⁹ The cult inventories testify to some small towns that had only a

⁴⁴ Exceptionally of wood or precious metal. See M. Darga, “Über das Wesen des *huwaši*-Steines nach hethitischen Kultinventaren,” *Revue hittite et asianique* XXVII/84–85 (1969): 5–24. See 11 n. 6 for a list.

⁴⁵ A. Goetze, *Kleinasien* (Kulturgeschichte des alten Orients 3; Munich: Beck, 1957), 168; Gurney, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion*, 36–37.

⁴⁶ Hutter, “Kultstelen und Baityloi”; Popko, “Anikonische Götterdarstellungen.”

⁴⁷ Popko, *Kultobjekte in der hethitischen Religion*, 135; idem, “Anikonische Götterdarstellungen,” 325.

⁴⁸ T. Özgüç and N. Özgüç, *Karahöyük Hafriyatı Raporu 1947: Ausgrabungen in Karahöyük* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1949), 69–72 with pls. VIII–X; Goetze, *Kleinasien*, 168 n. 3; Darga, “Über das Wesen des *huwaši*-Steines nach hethitischen Kultinventaren,” 16 with pls. i, ii; Gurney, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion*, 38.

⁴⁹ See, among others, Singer (“The *huwaši* of the Storm-God in Hattuša,” 245), contra Darga (“Über das Wesen des *huwaši*-Steines nach hethitischen Kultinventaren”).



Fig. 2.7. The “Dagger God” in Chamber B at Yazılıkaya. From K. Bittel, *Die Hethiter*, fig. 254.

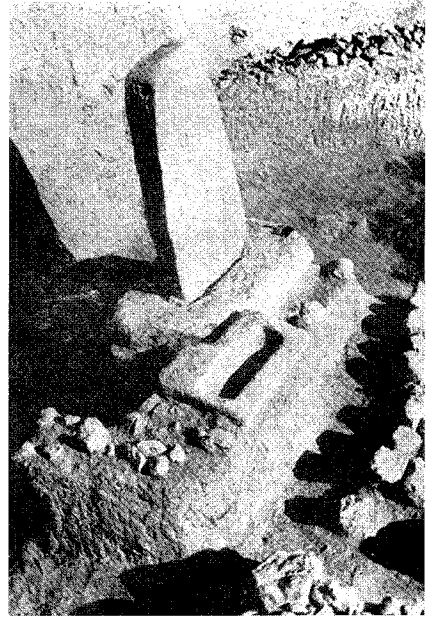


Fig. 2.8. Standing stone from Karahöyük engraved with Luwian hieroglyphs. From T. Özgüç and N. Özgüç, *Karahöyük*, pl. X 2.

huwaši- in lieu of a temple. In the city of Karahna, on the other hand, there were twenty-six deities, of which nine had temples and seventeen⁽¹⁾ had *huwaši-s*.⁵⁰ This juxtaposition of *huwaši-* and temple does not necessarily imply that the *huwaši-* required any other architectural features around it to render it parallel to the city temple.⁵¹ Each stela belonged to a specific deity, of which it was a representation, functioning in this respect just as the god’s statue functioned in his temple.⁵² In the same way that the cult statue within the sanctuary radiated its divinity onto the objects around it, so the *huwaši-* generated a sacred space of unspecified dimensions in the open cult place. But, as Güterbock notes, perhaps the question of whether the *huwaši-* was the deity or the place in which it was worshiped is one that the Hittites themselves never asked.⁵³

⁵⁰ *KUB* 38.12 iii 22’–23’; Güterbock, “Yazılıkaya: Apropos a New Interpretation,” 127. (Cf. *KUB* 38.6 iv 17 w. dupl. *KUB* 38.10 iv 3, with 32 stelae.)

⁵¹ Contra Hazenbos, *Organization of the Anatolian Local Cults*, 175.

⁵² Hutter, “Kultstelen und Baityloi,” 91–95, 103.

⁵³ Güterbock, “Hethitische Götterbilder und Kultobjekte,” 215.

Once established, *huwaši*-s appear for the most part to have been immovable. The anthropomorphic images, on the other hand, were mostly small and easily transported.⁵⁴ The fact that the god (i.e., his image) was periodically carried from his temple to his *huwaši*- outside town has caused some to wonder how the *huwaši*- could represent the deity if the deity is already present in his cult statue.⁵⁵ The presence of the deity in two forms simultaneously is a problem for us, but that is because we tend to think in terms of “either ... or ...” instead of “... as well as”⁵⁶

There is ample evidence that the gods in Hittite Anatolia were no more limited in quantity of forms than they were in variety. The texts reveal that as a result of royal benefaction, perhaps in fulfillment of vows made to the deity, some temples saw a proliferation of divine representations, so that where one would expect a single deity, one might find instead a multiplication of that deity. During a festival at Tahirpa, the queen offered sacrifices to eight Sun Goddesses of Arinna in the form of three statues and five sun disks,⁵⁷ which had been donated by six of her predecessors.⁵⁸ The supplemental image was not considered a replacement for the previous image of the deity but was treated as a new deity in its own right, suggesting that there was a resistance to the desacralization for such objects.⁵⁹ One imagines that as a result of this benefaction some temples must have become veritable galleries of divine images: each one representing the same deity, yet different.

So the religious establishment embraced the co-existence of *huwaši*- and anthropomorphic statue within a single temple and cult and found a way for the two objects to work together in the bringing of the one to the

⁵⁴ The portability of the one versus the other may have been the fundamental difference between the two images and the reason for the *huwaši*- being compared with the temple. So the *huwaši*- shared characteristics of both the cult statue and the temple.

⁵⁵ Güterbock, “Hethitische Götterbilder und Kultobjekte,” 215; Carter, “Hittite Cult Inventories,” 34 n. 2.

⁵⁶ Selz, “‘The Holy Drum, the Spear and the Harp’,” 183.

⁵⁷ Note the six sun disks fashioned as accoutrements of the Deity of the Night in the course of duplicating her divinity. Were they simply adornments, or were they also meant as avatars of the goddess, as with Pirinkir (see G. M. Beckman, “The Goddess Pirinkir and Her Ritual from Ḫattuša [CTH 644],” *Ktoma* 24 [1999]: 25–26)?

⁵⁸ *KUB* 25:14 i 10–31, discussed by S. R. Bin-Nun, *The Tawannanna in the Hittite Kingdom* (Texte der Hethiter 5; Heidelberg: Winter, 1975), 197–202.

⁵⁹ Interestingly, the cult inventories do not discuss what happens to the previous image, but I suspect they were not discarded. In *KUB* 55.43, a festival for renewing the *kurša*-s (edited by G. McMahon, *The Hittite State Cult of the Tutelary Deities* [Assyriological Studies 25; Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1991], 144–57), for example, the old *kurša*-s are moved to a less prominent sanctuary when the new one is consecrated and installed in the main temple.

other for the performance of certain ceremonies. This might involve, for example, setting the deity down in front of its *huwaši*- and making offerings to both images. But why use two images in a given ritual? The answer may be that with the introduction of the anthropomorphic statue came the anthropomorphization of the cult,⁶⁰ which included, among other things, the dressing, feeding and entertaining of the deity—activities presumably not required by or for symbolic representations, including *huwaši*-s. The symbol or *huwaši*- could no longer adequately fulfill all the ritual functions required of the statue (and perhaps vice versa), and the anthropomorphic cult remained incomplete as long as the statue was absent. In other words, the two images together may have formed a more perfect and complete focus for piety.

Animation

What all cultic images, whether symbolic, anthropomorphic or theriomorphic, have in common is the presence of the deity. To attract the deity to the statue, each image had to undergo a ritual of consecration and without such a rite, the inanimate, manmade object could not be imbued with life.⁶¹ With animation, the statue becomes “activated.”

A Hurro-Hittite Induction Ceremony

Hittite sources do not provide a satisfactory explanation of the circumstances under which a cult image, either anthropomorphic or symbolic, made the transition from object to deity, and we know little of the processes that animated these representations. From Kizzuwatna in southeastern Anatolia comes a ritual for the establishment of a satellite temple for the Goddess of the Night. It is difficult to say how much this ritual, which is co-authored by a Babylonian scribe (?) and a Kizzuwatnean priest, reveals about practices native to the populations of the Hittite heartland in central Anatolia. Nevertheless it offers the best available insights into the treatment of a new statue and the rituals surrounding its deposition in its new home. Only the first tablet of two, which reports on the first seven days of the ritual, is preserved. The activities of the first five days take place in the old temple:⁶²

⁶⁰ Wiggerman, in his overview of Mesopotamian religion, suggests precisely this: “Since the god-statue was anthropomorphic, the temple’s rituals were anthropomorphic too, and replayed the life of a divine paterfamilias and landowner.” F. A. M. Wiggerman, “Theologies, Priests, and Worship in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *CANE* 3:1862.

⁶¹ D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 82.

⁶² This ritual has recently been described and analyzed in detail by R. Beal (“Dividing a God,” in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. P. Mirecki and M. Meyer [Leiden: Brill, 2002], 197–208),

Day One: The priest instructs the smiths in the fashioning of the deity's image. This process is a three-part one, beginning with the modeling of the image itself, then turning to the furniture and accoutrements that will grace the new temple, and ending with the creation of the new deity's trousseau (comprised of garments for both sexes).

Day Two: The "waters of purification" are drawn and are taken to the roof of the temple where they will spend the night.⁶³ The deity is then attracted to the temple using colored strands of wool and fine oil "along seven roads and seven paths from the mountain, the river, the plain, Heaven and Earth." The day ends with the preparation for the rites that are to take place on the following day: the ritual of "pulling up," the *dupšaḥi*- ritual, the ritual of blood, the eulogy and the burnt offering.

Day Three: In the pre-dawn light, the waters of purification are brought down from the roof and the rites begin. In the ritual of "pulling up," the priest and officiant take turns pulling the deity up from a pit seven times each. The *dupšaḥi*- ritual is performed in the storehouse. The ritual of blood, involving the sacrifice of a fish⁶⁴ and kid or lamb, begins at dusk, followed by the eulogy and the burnt offering, using a sheep and a lamb respectively. The day's activities end with the return of the waters of purification to the roof of the temple along with various items that will form the next day's offerings to the goddess Pirinkir. Similar offerings are prepared for the deity in the temple.

Day Four: On the evening of the fourth day, the ritual of wellbeing is performed first for Pirinkir and then for the Goddess of the Night.

Day Five: On the last day in the old temple, *tuḥalzi*-offerings are presented to the deity. During the performance of the rite, the deity is beseeched to "divide her divinity" and take an honored place in the new temple.⁶⁵ The deity is then "pulled" from the wall with red wool seven times and her *uliḥi*- (an essential part of her image or clothing that stands in for the deity's statue during the performance of these rites) is placed in a *tallai*-container of fine oil, which is deposited in the new temple.

Day One in the new temple: The first day in the new temple may overlap with the last day in the old temple, at the discretion of the officiant. The day's agenda aims to attract the new deity along seven roads and seven paths and to do this the venue is changed to the riverbank. Beside the riverbank a tent has been erected and after the deity has been attracted, another *uliḥi*- (a newly created one rather than the one taken from the old temple) is brought into it together with various offering items. The ritual of blood, the eulogy and burnt offerings are performed again. The deity, represented now by the *uliḥi*-, is fed in the tent and then removed

with a full edition by J. L. Miller, *Studies in the Origins, Development and Interpretation of the Kiz-zuwatna Rituals* (Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten 46; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004).

⁶³ The ritual for drawing the waters of purification is preserved in another text (*KUB* 39.71 i 22–32), discussed by Beal ("Dividing a God," 203).

⁶⁴ See Miller, *Kizzuwatna Rituals*, 282 note 435, for the collation that confirms the reading KU₆.

⁶⁵ The goddess is entreated to "protect your person, divide your divinity, come to these new temples, take an honored place." We should understand this passage literally—the goddess splits into two (or more) divine beings and moves to inhabit the statue(s) that have been readied for it. *Ibid.*, 200, 208.

to the house of the officiant to the accompaniment of percussion instruments. There it receives more offerings and is circled by a *hušti*-stone, before being removed to the storehouse⁶⁶ where another burnt offering is made. The *ulihi*- is then taken to the deity and bound to it in some way. The day ends with preparations for the next day and the bringing of the waters of purification to the roof of the new temple to “sleep beneath the stars.”

Day Two in the new temple: Various offerings are prepared. The *tallai*-container filled with oil is opened and the *ulihi*- from the old temple, which has been soaking in it, is removed. Water and oil from the *tallai*-container are used to wash the wall of the temple. The old *ulihi*- is bound to the red scarf of the new deity.⁶⁷ At dusk the officiant uses the two daggers that were fashioned along with the new statue to dig a ritual pit, over which a sheep is slaughtered as an offering. The sheep’s blood is used to smear the wall, the golden image of the deity, and all the paraphernalia that were made for the new deity. Thus the temple is purified. The animal’s carcass is burned. The tablet ends here with a colophon.

The text describes the bloodying of the cella, the statue and the paraphernalia as purifying the new deity and the temple. But it is also possible that the blood is a symbol of birth in the Hittite text.⁶⁸ After all, the goddess is literally being reborn in a new incarnation and although there is no overt reference to birth in our ritual, note that on the third day the goddess is dipped into a pit two times seven times. Ritual pits served as a bridge to the underworld and are linked mythologically to the creation of humanity and to birth. It is perhaps therefore plausible to suggest that the pulling of the deity out of the pit was symbolic of her rebirth in a new form. The holy water was present at the time, but whether it was poured into the pit (making it symbolic of the amniotic fluid?) and the deity dipped into it during the rite we do not know.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Note that the rites performed in the old temple are being duplicated for the new deity, although not in precisely the same order.

⁶⁷ Whatever the *ulihi*- is, the act of binding two of them—one old and one new—to the new deity brings to mind the bridal tradition of “something old, something new,” with perhaps a not dissimilar meaning. The old *ulihi*- ties the new deity to the old, while the new one recognizes it as an independent entity. Cf. the discussion by Miller, *Kizzuwatna Rituals*, 409–12.

⁶⁸ This possibility was first suggested to me by Ted Lewis. Compare the Mesopotamian *mīs pī* ritual, in which three *mašqū* troughs are filled with blood to symbolize the deity’s birth. For the full ritual, see M. B. Dick and C. Walker, “The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian *mīs pī*,” in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. B. Dick (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 55–121, and for a discussion of the “Birth of the Statue” see M. B. Dick pp. 60–67, especially 62, below.

⁶⁹ A Hurrian ritual for the Heptad prescribes that the practitioner fashion a statue of the deity “in a pure place on a mountain wherever there is water” ([*nu k*]i^š-an a-ni-ya-az-zi HUR.SAG-i šu-up-pa-i

Nor do we know whether the river played a further role in the ritual. In the Mesopotamian *mīs pî* ritual, the statue is brought to the river, the fertilizing waters of Ea, as a symbol of its divine rebirth. The tools used to fashion the deity are thrown into the river, thus distancing the statue from its origin at human hands. The riverbank in Hittite theology was the place of the creation of humanity and a doorway to the underworld, but this symbolism is not overt in the preserved portions of the text. The second tablet that completes the initiation of the new statue is lost, and whatever remained of the process of bringing the statue to life that it may have outlined is therefore unknown.

Born in Heaven?

According to the induction ceremony for the Deity of the Night, the first step in creating a god was the appointment of the craftsmen who would form the image. There is no attempt to disguise the fact that the image is fashioned by the hand of man or to attribute it to the gods as in the Mesopotamian *mīs pî* ritual. The priest assigns the smiths with the task of fashioning the deity. The role of the craftsmen is minimized and the tools used are not mentioned at all,⁷⁰ nor does the surviving text relate how the tools that fashioned the deity were disposed of. Overall in what survives of this ritual there is no strong evidence of a desire to sever all links with the statue's manmade origins.⁷¹ Still, the smiths in our induction ritual were selected by the priest and may themselves have held a priestly office of sorts as temple dependents. Thus, we are one step closer to the idea that the fashioning of the image was a heavenly act.

Although the idea of the divine origin of the cult statue is difficult to trace in the surviving texts, the "Foundation Ritual for a New Palace" suggests that the royal palace as well as the statue of the king were divinely

pl-di ku-wa-pl-it [wa]^f-a¹-tar e-eš-zi nu DINGIR-LIM-aš e-eš-ri i-ya-zi; KUB 9.28 i 10–11). Later "he takes the water that was with the statue of the deity and pours it on its body (i.e., on the statue)" (*wa-a-tar DINGIR.MEŠ-aš e-eš-ri-ya ku-it ki-it-ta-ti § na-at da-a-i na-at-šan tu-ik-ki-iš-ši la-a-ḫu-u-wa-a-i; KUB 9.28 iv 5–8*). Clearly water was a key element in the forming of new deities.

⁷⁰ We do not know how the Hittite smiths were selected or whether they underwent an ordination as in Mesopotamia, but the latter is possible (see M. B. Dick, "Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image," in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. B. Dick [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999], 39).

⁷¹ Compare a passage from a deposition: "They questioned Halpaziti, the diviner and he said, 'When His Majesty was in Kizzuwatna, they gave the deity to the goldsmiths. They set to work thereon. Let them question them.' But when they questioned Mutta, he said, 'I worked on the [...] deity thereon'." (*ḫal-pa-lū¹ ḫal-pu-nu-uš-šir nu IQ-BI [dU]TU-ŠI-wa ku-wa-pi^{URU}Ki-iz-zu-wa-at-na e-eš-ta nu [DINGIR]IR-LUM A-NA LÚ.MEŠ KÜ.DÍM SUM-ir nu-wa-kán an-da i-e-er nu-wa a-pu-uš-ša pu-nu-uš-ša-an-du GIM-an-¹ma¹-wa mu-ut-ta-an pu-nu-uš-še-er nu-wa IQ-BI¹x[o]x x[o] DINGIR-LIM ú-uk an-da i-ya-nu-un; KUB 13.33 iv 1–6*).

sanctioned. The Throne declares to the king that the Sun God and the Storm God have allotted the trees of the forest for his use in constructing the new palace.⁷² This text involves an elaborate incantation to ensure the readiness and suitability of the timber for its new purpose. As in the Mesopotamian ritual, which traces the cult statue back to its origin in the orchard and then witnesses its “rebirth” as a divine product,⁷³ the Hittite Foundation Ritual traces the new palace back to its origin in the trees of the forest, which have been given to the king for this new purpose by the gods. In this same ritual, the Sun God and Storm God are also credited with rejuvenating the king’s image: “They made his statue of tin. They made his head of iron. They made his the eyes of an eagle. They made his the teeth of a lion.”⁷⁴ While divine statues were manmade, it appears that royal statues were the product of divine craft. It stands to reason then that temples and their appointments, including the cult statue, would have a divine origin as well. But where in the Hittite texts do we find evidence for this?

A Statue for the Deity

The induction ceremony described for the Deity of the Night is a fairly elaborate performance. Is it the case that every divine image, not only anthropomorphic statues but symbols and theriomorphic images as well, could expect the same rituals of vivification? We have no evidence, for example, of a comparable induction ceremony for a *huwaši-*, and some of the activities described for the Deity of the Night, such as the creation of a wardrobe, would have been unnecessary for divine symbols.⁷⁵

Aside from induction ceremonies, which, as we have seen, inaugurate a new deity, simpler rites of consecration are plentiful in Hittite ritual. Prior to the performance of specific rituals, *huwaši-*s and statues alike were anointed and washed.⁷⁶ Although the image has already presumably undergone whatever ritual was necessary to vivify it and render it a *bona fide* cult image,

⁷² KUB 29.1 i 35–49 (CTH 414).

⁷³ Dick, “Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image,” 40.

⁷⁴ ALAM-iš-ši NAGGA-aš i-e-er SAG.DU-ZU AN.BAR-aš i-e-er ša-a-ku-wa-aš-ši Tl₈. MUŠEN-aš i-e-er ZÚ.ĪI.A-ma-aš-ši UR.MAH-aš i-e-er (KUB 29.1 ii 52–54). This passage is usually understood as a metaphor for the boons granted to the king, with *ešri-* in its less common usage referring to the “physique” or “frame” of the king. I prefer to translate *ešri-* with its more common meaning “statue” and to understand the passage as referring to the actual enhancement of a royal statue, which in turn ensures the metaphorical enhancement of the person of the king.

⁷⁵ That is, unless the wardrobe was never actually worn by the deity but was housed in the temple for the deity’s metaphorical use. Conceptually this would be no different than the deity’s “consuming” the food presented to it in the temple.

⁷⁶ Goetze, *Kleinasien*, 168; V. Haas, *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion* (Handbuch der Orientalistik 15; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 507–8.

these simple acts of consecration perhaps served to reinvigorate it—a signal that its active participation would be required for the upcoming rite.

The consecration and induction of the cult image are key to making the statue work. Without the godhead residing in it, the statue is dead and cannot function. Conversely, the deity may not have been able to be effective without the image.⁷⁷ Did the act of consecration result in the conversion of the image from object to deity (transubstantiation), or was the idea that both object and deity coexisted in the image (consubstantiation)? In other words, did the Hittites see the deity *as* the statue or *in* the statue?⁷⁸

The equation of the deity with its image is readily apparent in the customary omission of the word “statue” when referring to divine images in Hittite texts. In his *Annals*, for example, Hattusili I writes, “I carried off seven deities to the temple of the Sun Goddess of Arinna.”⁷⁹ Because statue and deity were one and the same, to refer to the deity in terms of his statue would have been unnecessary.⁸⁰

The close identification of deity and statue is also evident in the myth of the battle between the Storm God and the Serpent. After the Storm God has recovered his heart and eyes, which had been taken from him by the Serpent, his *ešri-* is said once again to be sound. The myth refers to the physical form of the deity in terms of his statue (*ešri-*).⁸¹

At the same time, the fact that the cult inventories use ALAM “statue” to refer to the physical manmade anthropomorphic object (often in opposition to *šuniyatar*, as in, “the deity’s *šuniyatar* is an *ešri-* ...”) with all its lack of religious overtones, implies a conceptual distinction between the statue and the divine being believed to inhabit it.

The distinction between statue and deity is also evident in the iconography. The relief on the Schimmel stag rhyton shows the same deity represented in relief in two separate manifestations, one seated with peaked cap and cup in hand, the other standing on a hart (fig. 2.9). The two images may represent the heavenly and earthly manifestations of the deity. In other words, the deity and his statue (or, more likely, cult relief) are shown together.⁸² In support of this suggestion I offer three seals published by

⁷⁷ Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 30.

⁷⁸ This important distinction has been made by Andrew Stewart, personal communication.

⁷⁹ nu 7 DINGIR.MEŠ I-NA É dUTU URUTÚL-na [pé-]e-¹da-aḫ-ḫu-un (*KBo* 10.2 i 37–38).

⁸⁰ See J. Renger (“Kultbild. A. Philologisch,” *RIA* 6 [1980–83]: 309) who makes the same point regarding the Mesopotamian material. But we also cannot entirely rule out the possibility that the omission of “statue” was to avoid being specific, since the image might not in fact have been a statue, but a symbol.

⁸¹ *KBo* 3.7 iii 20 (*CTH* 321).

⁸² It is also possible that the artist may have rendered the deity in two forms as a celebration of different artistic traditions. I am aware that the identity of the seated figure is problematic and even its sex is

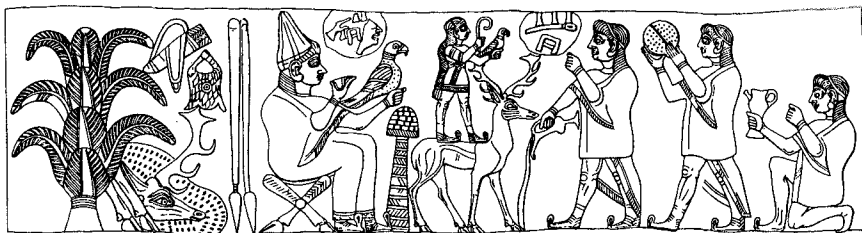


Fig. 2.9. Scene in relief on the stag rhyton in the Schimmel Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Güterbock as comparanda to the stag-rhyton scene.⁸³ In two of these, there is no second deity on a stag, suggesting that this deity is redundant at some level and that the seated figure is the real deity (as opposed to its statue). On the example from Adana, in the place reserved for the deity on the stag on the Schimmel rhyton is a pithos, an alternative form for a divine image, as we know from Paskuwatti's ritual (see above).

Supplementing the two anthropomorphic images rendered in the Schimmel relief is the object hanging from the tree behind the seated deity, which has been identified with the *kurša*,⁸⁴ a cult object or divine symbol associated with the Protective Deity—the same deity depicted standing on the stag. If we consider that the deer rhyton on which this relief is carved could itself be a cult object or symbol of the same deity (see above), then we are indeed dealing with a rather sophisticated layering of cult imagery where statue, symbol and theriomorphic image serve in concert to represent the deity.

unclear (H. G. Güterbock, "Hittite *kurša* 'Hunting Bag'," in *Essays in Ancient Civilization Presented to Helene J. Kantor*, ed. A. Leonard, Jr. and B. Williams [Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 47; Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1989], 115). It could be female, as some have suggested based on the fact that the figure holds a cup and a bird (attributes characteristic of goddesses) and despite the peaked cap equally indicative of gods (O. Muscarella, ed., *Ancient Art: The Norbert Schimmel Collection* [Mainz: von Zabern, 1974], No. 123). Some see in the pair a mother and son (van Loon, *Anatolia in the Second Millennium B.C.*, 45). But compare the Malatya relief discussed above (fig. 2.3), where the figure on the chariot may be the heavenly manifestation of the Storm God, who is represented also as a statue receiving a libation. For Mesopotamian examples of deity and statue depicted together on seals, see Dick ("Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image," 34). In both of Dick's examples, the statue is smaller than the seated deity.

⁸³ H. G. Güterbock, "A Note on the Frieze of the Stag Rhyton in the Schimmel Collection," *Anadolu 22* (Festschrift Akurgal) (1981–83): 1–5. The three seals are in the British Museum, Dresden, and the Adana Museum, respectively. See also Muscarella, *Ancient Art*, No. 123.

⁸⁴ Güterbock, "Hittite *kurša* 'Hunting Bag,'" 113–23.

Toward a History of the Cult Image

It remains to put the cult images in historical context. When and why were anthropomorphic statues introduced to Anatolia, and how did their introduction affect cultic worship and other forms of cult images? And is it possible to trace an evolution of forms over time?

Prehistory

We tend to associate cellas with monumental architecture and anthropomorphic statues, but in Anatolian prehistory such statues are not a natural constituent of a cultic precinct and no statues recognizable as cultic have been found prior to the Hittite period. Although cellas, or rooms in sacral complexes that were central to the performance of ritual pertaining to the supernatural, have existed in Anatolia from its early prehistory,⁸⁵ the divine presence in the cella was not necessarily represented by a cult statue.

One of the earliest possible pieces of evidence for anthropomorphism comes from a cultic structure at the aceramic Neolithic site of Nevalı Çori. This cult building was surrounded by a one-meter-deep bench covered with large stone slabs set between monolithic pillars with 'T'-capitals.⁸⁶ In its center stood two pillars with decoration in low relief. Roughly carved on the wider faces are long bent arms, the hands of which meet on the lower narrow side (fig. 2.10). A projection on the north upper side of one of the pillars suggests that a head existed here.⁸⁷ Could the Nevalı Çori pillars be a very early example of what the Hittites would later refer to as a *huwaši*-?⁸⁸ If so, the apparent anthropomorphism of the Nevalı Çori pillars would support the idea that *huwaši*-s were terminals for the divine presence. If divine representations, the pillars also provide a *terminus post quem* for the anthropomorphization of the gods, but context notwithstanding, their divine nature cannot be assumed.

Early Bronze Age Beycesultan and Tarsus have also revealed stone stelae within sacred enclosures.⁸⁹ A stela from Troy was carved with a

⁸⁵ E. Wasilewska, "Organization and Meaning of Sacred Space in Prehistoric Anatolia," in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. Quaegebeur (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 55; Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 481 and *passim*.

⁸⁶ H. Hauptmann, "The Urfa Region," in *Neolithic in Turkey*, ed. M. Özdoğan (Istanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, 1999), 74–75.

⁸⁷ M. Mellink, "Archaeology in Anatolia," *American Journal of Archaeology* 95 (1991): 126, as reported by H. Hauptmann.

⁸⁸ Note that Hauptmann ("The Urfa Region," 74) identifies a podium consisting of an orthostat fragment in the preceding level of the cult building as a pedestal for a cult statue.

⁸⁹ For Beycesultan, see S. Lloyd and J. Mellaart ("An Early Bronze Age Shrine at Beycesultan," *Anatolian Studies* 7 [1957]: 27–36); for Tarsus, see H. Goldman (*Excavations at Gözlükule—Tarsus*

human figural representation,⁹⁰ but it had been reused and its original context therefore lost. The twin stelae at Beycesultan and the similar altars at Tarsus were not decorated, and have been compared with Mycenaean “horns of consecration” owing to their shape. What we lack is evidence for symbolic representations outside of the stelae. Moveable objects that represented deities would likely have been removed from the cult room, and those that have survived might not be recognizable to us as divine representations.

The antiquity of the use of stelae in Anatolian cult cannot be disputed, even if their exact nature or purpose cannot be determined. Recently the case has been made for an eastern Anatolian/north Syrian origin for the use of stelae in Anatolian cult, based on examples from third-millennium Mari (archaeological) and Ebla (textual).⁹¹ This is supported in part by the fact that Hittite ^{NA}*ḫuwaši-* is a loanword from Akk. *ḫumâsum* and the logographic writing, ^{NA}ZI.KIN, is a folk etymology (ZI “life” + KIN “work”) based on Akk. *sikkanum*. Whether the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age stelae in Anatolia are part of a phenomenon that is independent of the spread of the use of stelae in the Late Bronze Age⁹² or whether they represent the beginnings of one continuous native tradition, *ḫuwaši*-s are already a well-established and fundamental component of Hittite cult at the onset of the Old Kingdom.



Fig. 2.10. Anthropomorphic pillar from Nevalı Çori. From M. J. Mellink, “Archaeology in Anatolia,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 94 (1990): 128, fig. 1.

II [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956], 17, 26–27). For a discussion of these stelae together, see Wasilewska (“Organization and Meaning of Sacred Space in Prehistoric Anatolia,” 485–88).

⁹⁰ C. W. Blegen et al., *Troy I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 155–56 and figs. 190–92. See also Wasilewska, “Organization and Meaning of Sacred Space in Prehistoric Anatolia,” 485–88.

⁹¹ Hutter, “Kultstelen und Baityloi,” 87–108.

⁹² Popko, “Anikonische Götterdarstellungen,” 324–25.

In Anatolia, the apparently long tradition of symbolic representations of gods⁹³ must be reconciled with an earlier (and ongoing) proliferation of anthropomorphic figurines that many consider to be divine. The well-known statuette of the seated female from the ceramic Neolithic site of Çatal Höyük in south central Anatolia is a case in point (fig. 2.11). She is shown seated on a chair flanked by felines and seemingly in the process of giving birth. Mortals in the iconography of the historical periods would not normally be represented flanked by wild animals, a fact that lends itself to the interpretation of the female as a goddess, although other interpretations are possible.

Haas deals with the problem of such alleged anthropomorphic divine representations by discounting an evolutionary theory of the relationship of divine symbols and anthropomorphic images and by viewing the variety of representations of the historical period as a result of centuries of development of divine “types.”⁹⁴ The alternative is to reject a divine interpretation for anthropomorphic figures in Anatolian prehistory.

We do not know when the gods were first conceived of in human form, but their anthropomorphization certainly preceded the formulation of the old Anatolian myths, which are cast with anthropomorphic deities. The use of symbolic representations of the gods in the cult does not preclude their anthropomorphization already in myth and the imagination. Nor is it necessarily the case that anthropomorphic statues followed hard on the heels of the gods’ first taking on human characteristics. With no certain *terminus post quem* for the anthropomorphization of the gods, how they were represented in the prehistoric cult remains an unanswerable question.

The Old Hittite Period

Although enthroned deities are a popular theme of Old Assyrian glyptic of the Colony period in Anatolia (ca. 2000–1740 B.C.E.), evidence for anthropomorphic cult statues in this era is lacking. Uhna carried off “our god” from Neša to Zalpuwa and later restored him. As is typical of Hittite texts though, the deity is treated as if “real”—i.e., there is no mention of a statue *per se* and we can be certain from the passage of no more than that a cult image of some variety was involved.

Leaving aside the uncertain evidence of the prehistoric periods, fully anthropomorphic cult statues appear to have been an innovation of the Hittite period and were a part of the Hittite official cult from the beginning of the

⁹³ According to Popko, the earliest symbolic representations would include the divine throne, solar disk, and *kurša*-.

⁹⁴ Haas, *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion*, 75.



Fig. 2.11. “Goddess” from Çatal Höyük seated between two lions. Courtesy of the Anatolian Civilizations Museum, Ankara. From Mellaart, Çatal Höyük, pl. IX.

historical period. Although references to anthropomorphic divine statues in the Old Hittite period (ca. 1680–1380 B.C.E.) are few, and I am aware of no uses of the phrase “statue of the god X,” there is little reason to doubt the presence of anthropomorphic statues. Hattusili I boasts in his Annals of taking numerous gods of silver and gold along with other valuables from the temples of conquered cities.⁹⁵ Moreover, an Old Hittite ritual to ensure the return of the missing deity offers aromatic woods to attract the deity back: “Let *šaḫi*-wood be in your statue!”⁹⁶

⁹⁵ *nam-ma-aš-ši* DINGIR.MEŠ š[*a-ra-a da-aḫ-ḫu-un*] ^dU EN *ar-ru-uz-za* ^d[U ^{URU}*Ha-la-ap*] ^dAL-LA-TUM ^dA-DA'-AL-LU-[UR ^dLi-lu-ri] 2 GUD KÜ.BABBAR 13 ALAM KÜ.BABBAR GUŠKI[N]; “Then for her [I took u]p the gods: The Storm God, lord *arruzza*, the [Storm] God [of Aleppo], Allatum, Atallur, (and) [Liluri], two silver oxen and 13 (dupl. 3) statues of silver and gold” (*VBoT* 13:3'–6' with dupl. *KBo* 10.2 ii 27–28). Cf. *KUB* 57.48:5'–7', w. dupl. *KBo* 10.2 ii 38–40; DUMU. MUNUS ^dAL-LA-TI ^dHé-pát 3 ALAM KÜ.BAB[*(BAR)*] 2 ALAM GUŠKIN *ki-i* INA É ^dMi-i-iz-^rzu'[(*-ul-la*)] *pé-e-da-aḫ-ḫu-un*.

⁹⁶ *ša-a-ḫi-iš e-eš-ri-it-ti e-eš-d[u]* (*KUB* 33.34 obv.? 12).

There is evidence of anthropomorphic statues in third-millennium Mesopotamia.⁹⁷ The adoption of such statues into the native Anatolian cult may have occurred at the same time and for the same reasons as the introduction of cuneiform and of Akkado-Sumerian literary traditions—that is, some time in the formative stages of the Hittite Old Kingdom—and almost certainly through the same intermediaries, the Hurrians in north Syria.

Tudhaliya IV

Returning now to Tudhaliya's restoration of the cult as reported in his inventories, a certain predilection for anthropomorphic forms has been observed,⁹⁸ the implication of which is that the occasion was viewed as an opportunity to upgrade traditional forms of the gods with more contemporary images. Indeed, in many instances where replacements are made, they are anthropomorphic, particularly when the deity involved is a sun goddess.⁹⁹ But a closer look reveals that the majority of replacements is toward theriomorphic forms—specifically, storm gods are given images in the form of bulls (fig. 2.12): “Storm god of Aššaradda: One old stela. His Majesty made a bull of iron, of one *šekan* (as a replacement).”¹⁰⁰ Mountain gods, on the other hand, are almost exclusively given new images in the form of a mace decorated with the sun disk and crescent, with which is associated an anthropomorphic statue. For example, one cult inventory reports, “Mt. Šaluwanta of (the city of) Harruwaša: One old stela. His Majesty made a mace, decorated with a solar disk and crescent moon, to which is attached an iron statue of a standing man of one *šekan*, (as a representation of) Mt. Šaluwanta.”¹⁰¹ Despite the occasional introduction of anthropomorphic

⁹⁷ Lambert, “Ancient Mesopotamian Gods,” 123–25; Selz, “‘The Holy Drum, the Spear and the Harp,’” 168; Renger, “Kultbild. A. Philologisch,” 307–9. For a review of the archaeological evidence, see U. Seidl (“Kultbild. B. Archäologisch,” *RIA* 6 [1980–83]: 314–19). Wiggerman (“Theologies, Priests, and Worship in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 1862, 1868–69) sees anthropomorphic statues as replacing divine symbols, like the sun disk, crescent, and star that represented the deity's original pre-anthropomorphic self—the anthropomorphization and socialization of the Mesopotamian gods being a result of the transition from nature god to city god.

⁹⁸ Gurney, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion*, 25; Laroche, “La réforme religieuse du roi Tudhaliya IV,” 92–93.

⁹⁹ As Güterbock (“Hethitische Götterbilder und Kultobjekte,” 204) has observed, while the male deities are often represented by cultic objects or as animals, goddesses are almost always depicted anthropomorphically (although the Sun Goddess can be represented by a solar disk).

¹⁰⁰ dU URU.A-aš-ša-ra-ad-da 1 NA⁴ZI.KIN an-na-la-an 1 GUD.MAḤ AN.BAR 1 še-kán dUTU-ŠI DÙ-at (*KBo* 2.1 ii 40–41, edited by Carter, “Hittite Cult Inventories,” 55, 65).

¹⁰¹ 1 NA⁴ZI.KIN HUR.SAG Ša-lu-wa-an-ta URUHar-ru-wa-ša-aš an-na-al-la-an 1 GIŠTUKUL ši-it-tar-za UD.SAR-za ú-nu-wa-an UGU-kán 1 ALAMLÚ GUB-aš AN.BAR 1 še-kán DÙ-an HUR.SAG Ša-lu-wa-an-ta-aš dUTU-ŠI i-ya-at (*KBo* 2.1 iii 13–16, edited by Carter, “Hittite Cult Inventories,” 56, 66).



Fig. 2.12. Orthostat relief from the city gate at Alaca Höyük showing the king worshipping before a theriomorphic representation of the Storm God. From K. Bittel, *Die Hethiter*, fig. 214.

statues, theriomorphic and symbolic representations continue to dominate in the inventories.¹⁰²

In consideration of these facts, the better question to ask is not what forms the new images took, but what forms were they replacing? The answer is almost universally *huwaši*-stones.¹⁰³ I am aware of no examples of a *huwaši*- replacing another image, although on one occasion a *huwaši*-of silver replaces another stone *huwaši*-.¹⁰⁴ One might conclude that this reflects a trend, if not towards anthropomorphic forms, then at least away from *huwaši*-s,¹⁰⁵ but these stelae are still very well represented elsewhere in the inventories. One also has to wonder whether the decision about the form of the divine image was even the king's (or priest's) to make, since it

¹⁰² An improved understanding of the geography of the towns involved in the inventories might prove helpful. If we knew where the replacements were being made—in areas of Hurrian influence, for example—we might have a better idea of why they were made. See Houwink ten Cate, “The Hittite Storm God,” 108.

¹⁰³ Exceptions include a partially(?) anthropomorphic image of the Storm God, which is replaced with a bull (*KBo* 2.1 ii 21–24); a tin-plated bull, which is replaced with a silver bull (*KBo* 2.1 i 28–29, 34–35); various symbols, which are replaced with a mace adorned with the sun disk and crescent and attached to which is a statue of the mountain deity (*KBo* 2.1 i 29–32, 35–37); and daggers, which are replaced with an anthropomorphic image (*KBo* 2.1 i 32–33, 37–39).

¹⁰⁴ *KBo* 2.1 ii 9–12.

¹⁰⁵ Possibly in a desire to have a smaller, more mobile cult image on hand?

seems that at least sometimes it was the prerogative of the deity in question to select the form of his or her image.¹⁰⁶

Since the king's intention was to restore cults that had been neglected, in those cases where anthropomorphic images were introduced, it is likely that the king's "benefaction" lay in their greater material value and not in any deliberate theological shift towards a fully anthropomorphic cult. He wanted to restore and/or enhance the sanctuary, not alter its forms of worship. While time and new influences may have intervened to change the course of worship, no political or religious agenda drove these innovations.

¹⁰⁶ See note 41.

Chapter Three

The Mesopotamian Cult Statue: A Sacramental Encounter with Divinity¹

Michael B. Dick

The thesis of my paper is that the Mesopotamian cult statue² is a special theophany or epiphany by which the deity's power and efficacy are made available to the iconodule. In fact it is the main conduit of divine self-disclosure (*deus extra effigiem non est*).³ Many contemporary scholars have had recourse to various philosophical systems to explain this relationship between image and deity (such as C. S. Peirce's semiotic distinction between types of signs and H. G. Gadamer's "ontologische Unlösbarkeit des Bildes von dem 'Dargestellten'"). I will try to illustrate this epiphanic bond using the Roman Catholic theology of the real presence (*transubstantiation*) in the Eucharist. I am not the first to have seen this analogy. In his 1988 article "The Graven Image," T. Jacobsen refers to the *mīs pī* ritual as "transubstantiating" the statue.⁴ K. Wilson, in her review of my 1999 book *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth*,⁵ commented that the

¹ Assyriological abbreviations can be found in CAD and R. Borger, *Handbuch der Keilschriftliteratur* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1967, 1975).

² The private divine statue (presence of the deity in the private divine image) is also a legitimate object of research, but because of the disproportionate amount of data for the official cult image I am focusing there.

³ K. van der Toorn, "The Iconic Book," in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. K. van der Toorn (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 21; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 235.

⁴ T. Jacobsen, "The Graven Image," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. P. Miller, P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 29.

⁵ M. B. Dick and C. Walker, "The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Creation of the Cult Image*, ed. M. B. Dick (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 55–121. Wilson's review is in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 19 (2000): 87.

transformation of human artifice into the divine takes place daily at every Catholic mass, a comparison I had actually already made in that book (page 57 note 2). A. Berlejung in a 1998 article adumbrates this relationship: “Gott und Bild waren wesentlich miteinander verbunden, so daß die Gottheit in ihrem Bild *real präsent* war.”⁶

In this paper I will develop this analogy more extensively. The similarity between the theology of the cult image and the Eucharist⁷ becomes even starker during the Christian Middle Ages when the liturgical function of the Eucharist like that of the Mesopotamian cult image was primarily to be viewed and exhibited in procession.

In figures 3.1 and 3.2 we can compare both “processions.” The first picture (fig. 3.1) is a drawing of a “procession” of cult images taken from a drawing by Layard, the original no longer preserved.⁸ The second illustration (fig. 3.2) is from a Procession of Corpus Christi, a fifteenth-century illumination in a Catalan breviary of Martin of Aragon.⁹

If literature often functions by “defamiliarizing” the reader, this essay is rather an attempt to “familiarize” an essential component of Mesopotamian religion, the cult image. Mesopotamian religion is distant from us by more than two thousand years. And it has been further “distanced”—even demonized—by the idol parodies of Second Isaiah.¹⁰ The modern reader in

⁶ A. Berlejung, “Geheimnis und Ereignis: Zur Funktion und Aufgabe der Kultbilder in Mesopotamien,” *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 13 (1998): 110.

⁷ The definition of Roman Catholic transubstantiation is found in *Enchiridion Symbolorum: Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, 33rd ed., ed. A. S. Henricus Denziger and Adolphus Schönmetzer (Barcelona: Herder, 1965) [henceforth abbreviated DS]. DS §1642, Council of Trent, March 1555 under Julius III: *per consecrationem panis et vini conversionem fieri totius substantiae panis in substantiam corporis Christi Domini nostri et totius substantiae vini in substantiam sanguinis eius* (“By the consecration of the bread and wine, the conversion takes place of the entire substance of the bread into the substance of the body of our Lord Christ and of the substance of the wine into his blood”). M. Luther’s theology of consubstantiation would probably also fit the data from the ancient Near East.

⁸ A. H. Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh from Drawings Made on the Spot*, vol. 1 (London: 1849), 65. This drawing is discussed by A. Berlejung, *Die Theologie der Bilder: Herstellung und Einweihung von Kultbildern in Mesopotamien und die alttestamentliche Bilderpolemik* (OBO 162; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1998), 41–42. The inclusion of this picture here is a trifle “disingenuous” since the procession undoubtedly is of captured images being “processed” into captivity. Nevertheless this drawing of a Neo-Assyrian orthostat invokes the image of a procession. For a superb treatment of the procession in Mesopotamia see B. Pongratz-Leisten, *Ina Šulmi Irub: Die kulttopographische und ideologische Programmatik der akītu-Prozession in Babylonien und Assyrien im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Mainz am Rhein: Phillip von Zabern, 1994).

⁹ Bibliothèque Nationale France, Roth 2529, fol. 248v Breviary of Martin of Aragon, used with permission.

¹⁰ See M. B. Dick, “Second Isaiah’s Parody on Making a Cult Image: (Isaiah 40:18–20; 41:6–7) and the Babylonian Mis Pi,” in *Lasset Uns Brücken Bauen...: Collected Communications to the XVth Con-*

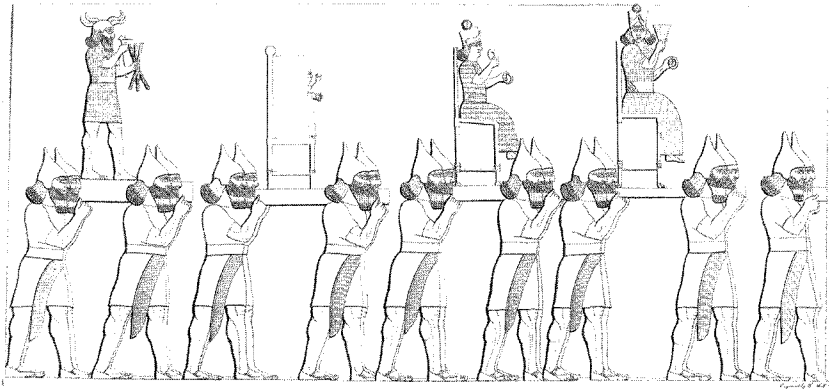


Fig. 3.1. Tiglath-Pileser III's soldiers carrying away the statues of the gods of a conquered city. From A. H. Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh* (London: J. Murray, 1853), pl. 65.

the West has difficulties seeing cult images in any positive sense. The West has been further inured to iconic religions by the iconoclasm of Judaism, Islam, and by several iconoclastic Christian movements (Byzantine, Carolingian, Reformation). As a result, many of us cannot appreciate modern iconic religions such as Hinduism. This paper seeks to show that the concern of Mesopotamian religion (the best documented of all ancient religions) to “enliven” or consecrate the cult image is remarkably similar to the cultic activities of some mainstream Christian religions today. If bread and wine can become the deity, why cannot stone and wood?

A Caveat

The obstacles to describing the theology of the Mesopotamian cult image are almost insurmountable. Although I do not share the total diffidence about our ability to understand Mesopotamian religion famously espoused by A. L. Oppenheim (“Why a ‘Mesopotamian Religion’ should not be written ...”),¹¹ the barriers are formidable; and my methodology necessarily

gress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Cambridge 1995, ed. K.-D. Schunck and M. Augustin (Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums 42; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), 193–202; K. Holter, *Second Isaiah's Idol-Fabrication Passages* (Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie 28; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995).

¹¹ A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 172. He gives two reasons for this inability: the nature of the available evidence, and the barriers of conceptual conditioning.



Fig. 3.2. Procession of Corpus Christi, a fifteenth-century illumination in a Catalan breviary of Martin of Aragon. From Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Roth 2529, fol. 248v, with permission.

adopted in this chapter is *prima facie* flawed. My sources, archaeological and textual, are drawn from different geographical areas and chronological periods. Thus my generalized conclusions must remain both suspect and provisional.

The Nature of the Gods

The Mesopotamian gods possess corporeality:¹² they share with us size, age, gender, attractiveness, and even in rare cases mortality. This anthropomor-

¹² B. Gladigow, "Gottesvorstellungen," *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* 3 (5 vols.; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1998), 32–49.

phism¹³ is implied by some of the oldest recorded pre-Sargonic Sumerian onomastica: dingir-a-mu (gu₁₀), “the god is my father,” dingir-ama-gu₁₀, “the god is my mother,” utu-šeš, “Utu is my brother,” and utu-men-su₁₃, “Utu has a far-reaching crown.”¹⁴ The Mesopotamian gods need nourishment, drink, clothing, jewelry, cleansing, travel, music, perfume and sex. All of this makes their presence in the anthropomorphic cult image more suitable and provides the premise for all ancient Near Eastern *latreia* (“worship”). Of course the corporeality of Jesus resulting from the Christian belief in the Incarnation is a *sine qua non* for the Eucharistic presence.

There are divine descriptions which strive to achieve a degree of transcendence in the ancient Near Eastern deities. Thus they are not exactly like any human form one might experience (Hendel’s “transcendent anthropomorphism”¹⁵). The appearance of Marduk in *Enūma Eliš* (I 94) is “impossible to understand, difficult to visualize” (*ḥasāsīš lā naṭā amāriš pašqa*)—a fact made clear in the following description: “four were his eyes, four were his ears, when his lips moved, fire blazed forth. His four ears were enormous” (I 95–96). In a hymn to Ninurta, the god’s body parts are cosmic, “your eyes O lord, are Enlil and Ninlil ... your eyebrows are the corona of the sun ... your mouth’s shape, O lord, is the evening star.”¹⁶ Such texts, according to A. Livingstone, “emphasize the ineffable nature of the divine by offering descriptions which are only barely conceivable.”¹⁷ The earthly presence of the god in the temple *papāḥu*—on a pedestal, in a niche under a baldachin, surrounded by curtains—would have optically preserved this transcendence, much as the curtained tabernacle does for the Eucharistic bread in a Roman Catholic Church.

The Cult Image

Archaeologists have *a priori* difficulties in even determining whether or not a statue was a divine cult image. An improved definition of our term “cult statue” would also be helpful. Berlejung defines an “image/Bild” as

¹³ Perhaps it would be more accurate to follow ancient Near Eastern anthropogonic myths and say we humans are theomorphic.

¹⁴ G. J. Selz, “‘The Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp’: Towards an Understanding of the Problems of Deification in Third Millennium Mesopotamia,” in *Sumerian Gods and Their Representations*, ed. I. J. Finkel and M. J. Geller (Groningen: Styx, 1997), 185–86 n. 8.

¹⁵ R. S. Hendel, “Aniconism and Anthropomorphism in Ancient Israel,” in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. K. van der Toorn (Biblical Exegesis and Theology 21; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 207.

¹⁶ Hendel, “Aniconism and Anthropomorphism in Ancient Israel,” 208.

¹⁷ A. Livingstone, *Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works of Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 93.

die sinnhafte und beschreibbare Erscheinung einer tiefer gründenden Wirklichkeit, die Manifestation unsichtbarer Realität. Ein solches Bild macht also Unsichtbares sichtbar und führt den Betrachter geradewegs in die verborgene Wirklichkeit.¹⁸

The adjective “cult” adds a consideration of the functionality of this image. In distinction to votive images, private divine statues, or images of the monarch, the cult image¹⁹ is the focus of public *latreia* and marks the official presence of that deity, around which the deity’s ceremonies revolve. Thus the cult image functions on both horizontal (*ālu* [city]—*šēru* [wilderness]) and vertical planes (*šamû* [heavens]—*eršetu* [underworld]). Similar axes function in the Eucharist: heaven—earth; altar—community (*communio*).

Certain artistic canonical principles have evolved: size (relative and absolute), large eyes, flounced skirt or garment, horned crown, and a particular weapon or other symbol (*šurinnu*, *miṭṭu* or *kakku*) associated with a specific deity.²⁰ We also should not expect many such cult images to have survived, since texts tell us that they often had a perishable core of wood plated with gold and were clothed in precious attire (*šukuttu*) that would have been stolen long ago.²¹ Despite these delimiting factors, some divine statuettes have been found but none clearly datable before the third millennium B.C.E.²² This has prompted A. Spycket²³ to question evidence for the existence of anthropomorphic cult statues before the Neo-Sumerian period (Ur III) in either excavations or texts.

Although archaeology has not disproved Spycket’s argument, the early existence of such divine cult statues seems assured.²⁴ For example,

¹⁸ “... the tangible and describable appearance of a deeper-based reality, the manifestation of the unseeable reality. Such an image makes the invisible visible and leads the worshipper directly to the hidden reality.” Berlejung, *Theologie der Bilder*, 6.

¹⁹ It is important to realize that the *mīs pī* ritual was not limited solely to anthropomorphic “statues,” but could also be used for other objects which were considered to embody the divine, such as a lunar disk. See Berlejung, *Theologie der Bilder*, 181–82.

²⁰ W. W. Hallo, “Cult Statue and Divine Image: A Preliminary Study,” *Scripture in Context 2: More Essays on the Comparative Method*, ed. W. W. Hallo, J. C. Moyer, and L. G. Perdue (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 4–5.

²¹ H. Sauren, “Review of Spycket’s *Les Statues*,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 14 (1969): 118.

²² For discussion and bibliography see Berlejung, *Theologie der Bilder*, 35 n. 191.

²³ A. Spycket, *Les Statues de culte dans les textes mésopotamiens des origines à la Ire dynastie de Babylone* (Cahiers de la Revue biblique 9; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1968).

²⁴ “... indisputable existence of cult statues already in the middle of the third millennium (Selz, “The Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp,” 168; cf. *ibid.*, 185–86 nn. 7–8). Evidence for their early existence is admittedly more inscriptional than archaeological.

the military record of the ambitious *ensi* of Umma, Lugal-zagesi (ca. 2340 B.C.E.), against Uru-inimgina reports:

sag-¹u_g¹ é-^dama-geštin-na-ka šu-bi-bad ^dama-geštin-ta
kù-za-gìn-na-ni ba-ta-kéš-kéš pú-ba ì-šub

In Sagub, in the temple of the goddess Amageštin, he (Lugal-zagesi) plundered; he robbed the goddess Amageštin of her precious metal and lapis-lazuli and threw her in the well.²⁵

This passage evidently refers to her cult statue.²⁶ Similarly, references to the travels of the gods—cited in texts and represented on seals—that predate Neo-Sumerian times can only refer to the transport of the divine image.²⁷ P. Amiet's *dieu-bateau* motif dates to Early Dynastic glyptic²⁸ and probably portrays this transport of the cult image.²⁹ G. Pettinato mentions pre-Sargonic Sumerian month names such as the following from Lagash that refer to the cult statue: Month in which the goddess Baba goes to her new temple (itu- ^dba-ba₆-é-gibila_x-na-ì-gin-gin-a).³⁰

The absence of the Sumerian phrase *alam/dùl DN*, “statue of DN,” (at least before the Isin/Larsa period and still rarely thereafter) should not surprise us, for in Mesopotamian religion the offerings were not placed before the statue but before the god. The statue was the living embodiment of the deity;³¹ the deity was the reality, not the statue! By contrast, offerings made before *statues* of living kings and other mortals are designated as such.³² Likewise, the Roman Catholic Mass refers to the consecrated bread and wine as the “body of Christ” and the “blood of Christ,” which is also car-

²⁵ H. Steible, *Die altsumerischen Bau- und Weihinschriften* (Freiburger Altorientalische Studien 5; Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1982): Ukgagina 16: 6:11–7:6.

²⁶ G. Selz, “Eine Kultstatue der Herrschergemahlin Šaša: Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Vergöttlichung,” *Acta Sumerologica* (Japan) 14 (1992): 246.

²⁷ Sauren, “Review of Spycket's *Les Statues*,” 116–19.

²⁸ P. Amiet, *La glyptique mésopotamienne archaïque* (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1961), 177. These images are also instances of the processions described in n. 8.

²⁹ E. J. Wilson, “Holiness” and “Purity” in *Mesopotamia* (*Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 237; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1994), 27. It is interesting to note that in this *dieu-bateau* motif, the anthropomorphic divine portrayal appears first and only subsequently does the symbolic representation appear (e.g., star). This is contrary to the evolution suggested by some (P. Amiet, *La glyptique mésopotamienne archaïque*, 2nd ed. [Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1980], 178).

³⁰ G. Pettinato, “Review of Spycket's *Les Statues*,” *Bibliotheca orientalis* 26 (1969): 212. See text 243 in F.-M. Alotte de la Fuye, *Documents présargoniques* (5 vols.; Paris: E. Leroux, 1908–1920).

³¹ Pettinato, “Review of Spycket's *Les Statues*,” 213; Sauren, “Review of Spycket's *Les Statues*,” 118; Selz, “Eine Kultstatue der Herrschergemahlin Šaša,” 247–48.

³² Hallo, “Cult Statue and Divine Image,” 68.

ried before believers in procession. Thus, after the Consecration, the Missal for the Tridentine Mass says “*The Body of Christ* is lifted up for worship” when the priest lifts the Eucharistic Bread.

The Mesopotamian statue was often crafted of a wooden or bitumen core (*mēsu*-wood is called the “flesh of the gods” in the Erra Epic), plated with gold and silver, and clothed in costly robes with gold and silver spangles, not unlike the Infant of Prague.³³ The god after all had to be portable to be borne to his/her various festival shrines. The divinity of the statue was manifested in its brilliance and splendor (*puluḫtu*, *melammu*, *namurratu*) which had to be maintained by the gold of its clothing and the polish of its precious metal plating.³⁴ We gain an idea of the composition of such statues, at least in the Neo-Assyrian period, from letters referring to gold for plating and stones for inlays for eyes, beards, ears, etc.³⁵ We also gain an idea of the composition of such cult images from the Neo-Assyrian letter of Mar-Issar to Esarhaddon. A Neo-Assyrian official, the *alahḫinu*, had the responsibility (*putuḫḫu naši*) to check on the wardrobe and jewelry of all the gods (TÚG. 𒀭.A *lubussu šukuttu ša ilāni gabbu amāru*).³⁶ The Neo-Babylonian temple had the *lubuštu* ceremony for the periodic clothing of the gods.³⁷ Indeed, the different divine apparel for the statue expressed different realities or aspects about the god; so the *šer’itu*-robe worn by Marduk during the New Year festival symbolized the water (Tiamat) overcome by him in the *Enūma Eliš* myth.³⁸ If the gods deteriorated, there was even a special ritual of *mīs pî* for their restoration.³⁹ In the large omen compendium, the *šumma alu*, we read that the physical appearance of the god/statue in a public procession (*Akītu*) revealed the deity’s plans for the city.

³³ P. J. Boden, “The Mesopotamian Washing of the Mouth (Mis Pi) Ritual: An Examination of Some of the Social and Communication Strategies Which Guided the Development and Performance of the Ritual Which Transferred the Essence of the Deity Into Its Temple Statue” (Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1998), 11.

³⁴ E. Cassin, “Forme et identité des hommes et des dieux chez les Babyloniens,” in *Le temps de la réflexion*, vol. 7, *Corps des dieux*, ed. C. Malamoud and J.-P. Vernant (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 74.

³⁵ S. W. Cole and P. Machinist, *Letters from Priests to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal* (State Archives of Assyria 13; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1998), 46–47.

³⁶ E. Ebeling, *Stiftungen und Vorschriften für assyrische Tempel* (Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Veröffentlichung 23; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1954), 24 ii 9; K. Deller, “Zur Syntax des Infinitivs im Neuassyrischen,” *Orientalia Nova Series* 31 (1962): 226–27.

³⁷ CAD L 235a.

³⁸ A. Berlejung, “Geheimnis und Ereignis,” 126.

³⁹ See C. Walker and M. Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian Mis Pi Ritual* (State Archives of Assyria Literary Texts 1; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001), TuL 27 in Appendix, 226–45. (This critical edition will be referred to *infra* as Walker and Dick, *Induction*.)

When Marduk leaving the Esagila temple at the beginning of the year has
 an open mouth: Enlil will raise his voice in anger against the land.
 When Marduk has his eyes closed: the inhabitants of the land will experience
 unhappiness.
 When Marduk has a sombre face: famine will take hold of the countries.
 When Marduk has a face that shines: Enlil will make the land shine
 forever.⁴⁰

The Relationship Between the Cult Statue and the Deity

How did the Mesopotamians regard the relationship between the cult image and the deity? The answer is not simple and probably differed, as I warned at the beginning, on both diachronic and synchronic axes; that is, it changed through time and in different regions. Contemporary scholars are not of one mind about the relationship between deity and image. E. M. Curtis in his review article on "Images in Mesopotamia and the Bible" maintains, "the Mesopotamians believed that the deity was present in the cult statue."⁴¹ However, R. E. Friedman sees the role of the cult statue as only "to remind" the worshiper of the deity's presence, much as does an icon in a Christian church.⁴² Both T. Mettinger⁴³ and A. Berlejung⁴⁴ apply contemporary studies of the philosophy of symbol to the cult image. Mettinger uses C. S. Peirce and Berlejung cites H. G. Gadamer.

In this paper I use the analogy of the Roman Catholic Theology of the "Eucharistic Presence." To Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians the bread and wine during the Eucharistic ritual become the real presence of the Divine Jesus,⁴⁵ while still subsisting under the appearance of bread and wine. This Eucharistic analogy helps us understand the theology of the ancient Near Eastern cult image. By the words of the Eucharistic Prayer and the invocation of the Holy Spirit (in Orthodox tradition), the bread and wine "made by human hands" become the real presence of Jesus. Of course I could also use Luther's consubstantiation. These scholastic subtleties between transubstantiation and consubstantiation would not have occurred (fortunately) to the Babylonian *āšipu*.

⁴⁰ Cited in van der Toorn, "The Iconic Book," 234.

⁴¹ E. M. Curtis, "Images in Mesopotamia and the Bible: A Comparative Study," in *The Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature: Scripture in Context 3*, ed. W. Hallo, B. W. Jones, and G. L. Mattingly (Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies; Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 42.

⁴² R. E. Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1987), 35.

⁴³ T. N. D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series 42; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1995), 20–23.

⁴⁴ Berlejung, *Theologie der Bilder*, 6–11.

⁴⁵ *Novus Ordo Missae* (1970): "this bread, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life."

Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 400 C.E.) explains:

He (Jesus) did not say, 'This is the symbol of my body and blood'; but 'this is my body, and this is my blood,' teaching us not to see the nature of the object, for, in becoming Eucharist, the objects are changed into the body and blood of Christ.⁴⁶

Likewise, by a cultic ritual (*mīs pī*)—*legomena* (*šiptu*), "what is said," and *drômena* (*epištu*), "what is done"—the "work of human hands" became for the iconodule the real presence of the deity (not a symbol)!⁴⁷

"Real Presence" and Heavenly Presence

As stated earlier, in Babylon offerings are brought before Marduk himself in the Esagila and not before the *statue* of Marduk! We can sense this in Kabti-ilâni-Marduk's eighth-century B.C.E. theological masterpiece, the Erra Epic. The sad fate of the Marduk statue, with its soot-covered visage and deteriorated clothing, happens to Marduk himself, who can only appreciate his sorry state when the conniving god Erra points it out:

What happened to your attire (*šukuttu*), to the insignia of your lordship, magnificent as the stars of the sky? It has been dirtied! What happened to the crown of your lordship, which made Eḫalanki as bright as Etemenanki? Its surface is shrouded over! (I 127–29)⁴⁸

The Erra Epic makes it clear that if a statue's appearance corrupts, then the deity can abandon his image. Erra reassures Marduk that he shall rule in his stead during Marduk's absence while his statue is being restored:

⁴⁶ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *On Matthew 26:26*, *Patrologia graeca* 66.713. The Seventh Ecumenical Council, Nicaea II (787) differentiates the Eucharist from an icon: "Neither the Lord nor his apostles anywhere stated that the bloodless sacrifice offered by the priest is an icon or picture . . . after consecration the very body and blood of Christ are truly present." (*Acta Conciliorum* 4.309, 372.)

⁴⁷ Berlejung (*Theologie der Bilder*, 177 n. 932) is correct that the statue in a real sense was already a god prior to the *mīs pī* by virtue of its supernatural origins. Boden stresses that the image starts out material and becomes a god. Both may be correct, in that in rituals the goal of a liturgy may be proleptically reached from the beginning. Hence in the Roman Catholic Eucharist, the bread and wine are proleptically spoken of as the "body and blood of Christ" even before the consecration. However, Boden's argument from the use of the impersonal Sumerian pronoun *-bi* in the incantation *én ab-na ní-bi-ta è-a* is weak: "This . . . suggest(s) that the statue was recognized as a material object" (Boden, "The Mesopotamian Washing of the Mouth," 179). As M.-L. Thomsen (*The Sumerian Language: An Introduction to Its History and Grammatical Structure* [Mesopotamia: Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology 10; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1984], §103) suggests, there is frequent confusion in later Sumerian texts between *-bi* and *-ani*.

⁴⁸ Translation from L. Cagni, *The Poem of Erra* (Sources from the Ancient Near East 1/3; Malibu: Undena Publications, 1977).

Erra opened his mouth and spoke to Prince Marduk, 'Until you enter that house, Prince Marduk, and Girra purifies your garment and you return to your place, till then I shall rule in your stead.' (I 180)

Similarly, following our Eucharistic theological paradigm, we note that in 1443–44 the Archbishop of Geneva complained about the status of the Eucharistic bread in St. Sixtus Church:

Corpus Christi ... in frustra dispersum in pisside, macilentum, inter pulveres et inter vermes et sine corporali cum omni ignominia teneri.

Christ's body is kept in great disgrace, scattered uselessly in the pyx among dust and worms and without a corporal.⁴⁹

Sennacherib's kidnapping of the Marduk statue from Babylon in 689 B.C.E. in reality marked the *god* Marduk's exile in Assyria, as we learn in the theologically significant Marduk's Ordeal, first edited by Zimmern.⁵⁰ There we read that Marduk lost a lawsuit (a *rîb* like Psalm 82?) brought against him by the god Ashur and was deported to Assyria. As the *Akitu* Chronicle (Chronicle 14 31–33) records: "For 8 years of Sennacherib, 12 years of Assurbanipal, for 20 years, Bel stayed in Aššur."⁵¹

Nevertheless, several divine statues of the same deity could coexist within a city (e.g., different statues of Ishtar in Arbail) or even within the same temple (several statues of Marduk each with a different name in the Esagila in Babylon⁵²). Thus the statue is not coterminous with the deity, even when "really present" in the image. Thus in the ninth century King Nabû-apla-iddina could consecrate the statue of Shamash using the *mîs pî*, which he performs "before Shamash" (*maḥar* ^d*Šamaš*; IV 24). Thus he differentiates the statue/Shamash from the deity. The impression from a cylinder seal of the time of Naram-Sin (ca. 2250 B.C.E.) engraved at Girsu (fig. 3.3) also illustrates the relationship between deity and cult image, one of identity and difference.⁵³ The worshiper appears before a vegetation goddess in person, behind whom (to the far left) rests her statue on its socle.

⁴⁹ M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 44.

⁵⁰ Livingstone, *Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works*, 208–35.

⁵¹ A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Texts from Cuneiform Sources 5; Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1975).

⁵² A. George, "Marduk and the Cult of the Gods of Nippur at Babylon," *Orientalia Nova Series* 66 (1997): 65–70.

⁵³ M. B. Dick, "The Relationship Between the Cult Image and the Deity in Mesopotamia," in *Intellectual Life of the Ancient Near East: Papers Presented at the 43rd Rencontre assyriologique internationale*, ed. J. Prosecký (Prague: Oriental Institute, 1998), 111–16.

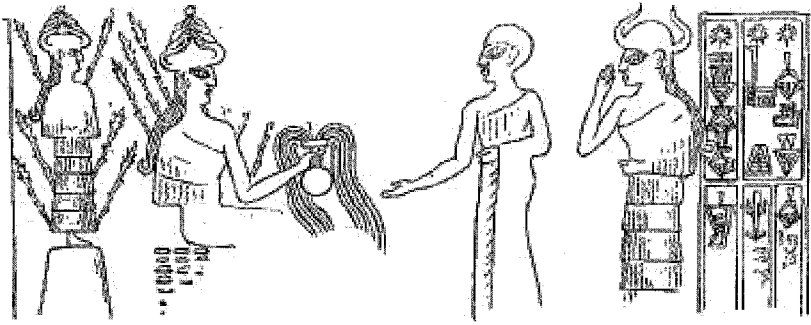


Fig. 3.3. Cylinder Seal from the time of Naram-Sin (2550 B.C.E.) engraved at Girsu. From L. Delaporte, Musée du Louvre, Catalogue des cylindres, cachets et pierres gravées de style oriental (Paris: Hachette, 1920), t. 103.

Similarly the Eucharistic species are not coterminous with the heavenly Jesus, so that the Eucharistic Presence can be found simultaneously in churches throughout the world or within several chapels in the same church. We can detect a similar graphic relationship between Jesus and the Eucharist in the medieval picture from a sixteenth-century Book of Hours (fig. 3.4). This picture differentiates graphically the Eucharistic Christ from the heavenly.⁵⁴

This multilocation of the deity causes problems for T. Scheer in her excellent analysis of the cult statue in Greece (*Die Gottheit und ihr Bild*). Because the Homeric gods can be away on trips (e.g., Zeus to Ethiopia) and are thus not omnipresent,⁵⁵ she argues that the cult image is really only a possible temporary dwelling place for the god, which he/she might periodically deign to visit. It is not a perduring subsistence:

Bestätigt wird die These vom Götterbild als einem Objekt, in dem die Gottheit zeitweilig Platz nimmt, auch durch einen Begriff aus dem Begriffsfeld für 'Statue,' der bereits kurz behandelt worden ist: das Wort 'ἔδος.'⁵⁶

However, there are problems in arguing from a Greek paradigm to understand the Mesopotamian theology, since the Greek cult images underwent no ritual consecration analogous to the Mesopotamian *mīs pī*.⁵⁷ The Greek

⁵⁴ J. Paul Getty Museum, 84.ML.83 (Ms 3) leaf Iv, *The Mass of Saint Gregory* from the Book of Hours by Simon Bening (illuminator). Used with permission.

⁵⁵ T. S. Scheer, *Die Gottheit und ihr Bild: Untersuchungen zur Funktion griechischer Kultbilder in Religion und Politik* (Zetemata 105; Munich: C. H. Beck, 2000), 116–17.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 114–15.

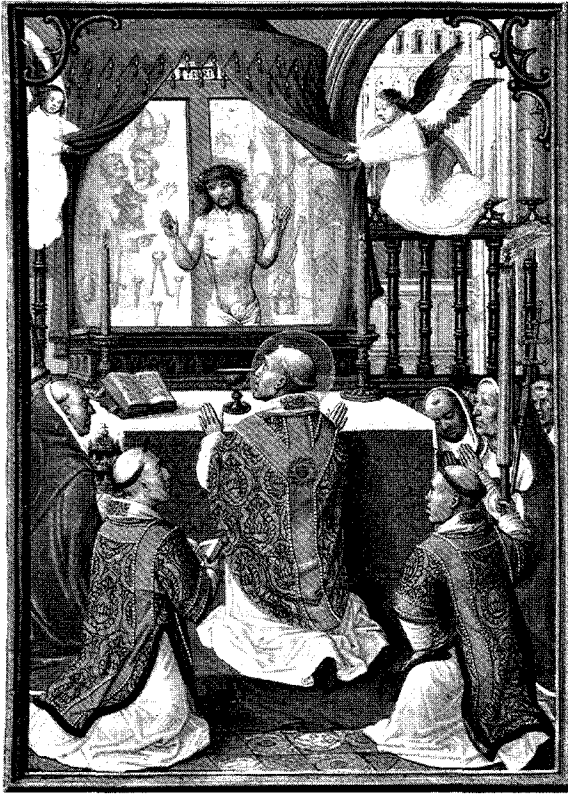


Fig. 3.4. Mass of St. Gregory from the Book of Hours (84. ML.83 [Ms 3] leaf lv) by Simon Bening (illuminator). Used with permission of the J. Paul Getty Museum.

word ἱδρυσις does not refer to a consecratory ritual (like the *mīs pî*), rather it merely refers to the act of installing the image. It is also risky to argue from the frequent peregrinations of the Homeric gods in the *Iliad* to a theology of divine presence; the travels of Zeus, for example, are necessary as a plot device to explain the ebb and flow of the earthly battles.

At first glance, certain Babylonian texts could support a similar thesis for the Mesopotamian cult image. In *Enūma Eliš* (VI 52) the gods propose making Babylon “the chamber that shall be our stopping place” (*kummukku lu nabattani*),⁵⁸ the middle ground where the gods above and below could

⁵⁸ This probably explains the temple name *ub-šu-ukkina-na*, “Court of the Assembly” (*EE* VI 162); see A. R. George, *House Most High: The Temples of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Mesopotamian Civilizations 5; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 154.

occasionally meet. However, this atypical example is used as a unique privilege for Babylon as the very gateway of the gods. Likewise, some scholars have argued that the presence of the deity in the Mesopotamian cult statue was transitory.⁵⁹

In short, the difficulty of reconciling heavenly and earthly presences lies with the modern mind, which directed by the fear of logical contradictions has problems reconciling these elements.⁶⁰ Selz explains, "That the statue itself is man-made, a piece of decorated wood (or stone) *and* the god ... all of this seems problematic, even contradictory to us, but evidently was not to the mind of ancient man."⁶¹

There was a similar problem in the history of Eucharistic theology, wherein many objected, how could Christ be both "at the right hand of the Father in Heaven and in the Eucharist in various churches on earth"? Both presences were affirmed by Pope Clement IV in 1265: the Eucharist "is truly, really, and essentially the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ notwithstanding that he is locally in Heaven" (*esse vere, realiter et essentialiter corpus et sanguinem Domini nostri Jesu Christi licet localiter sit in caelo*; DS §849). This debate was also taken up by Zwingli with Luther's disciple in the Marburg Colloquy.

Permanence of the "Real Presence"

The destruction of the consecrated bread and wine does not entail the destruction of Jesus himself. Nevertheless the Eucharist Presence perdures only as long as the appearance of bread and wine remain (*speciebus remanentibus*, DS §1101). The Roman Church, however—and here we have a dissimilarity—maintains that Jesus does not abandon the Eucharist even in inappropriate situations; Pope Gregory XI in 1371 denounced the idea that if the consecrated host falls "*in aliquem turpem locum*," then it ceases to be the body of Christ (*Christus ad caelum rapitur ...*) and returns to being just bread (DS §1101–3).

⁵⁹ A. Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth: The Consecration of Divine Images in Mesopotamia," in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. K. van der Toorn (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 21; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 46 n. 3.

⁶⁰ See P. Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?: An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination*, trans. P. Wissing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), esp. the chapter "The Plurality and Reality of True Worlds," 17–26.

⁶¹ Selz, "'The Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp,'" 183.

The perdurance of the divine real presence in the Mesopotamian cult image appears even more conditional.⁶² (Here we have the most detectable difference between the two elements of our analogy.) The destruction of the cult image caused significant but not consistent results, which complicates our attempts to clarify the relationship between the deity and his/her cult statue. The god could even abandon his/her cult image, after the statue had been neglected (the Erra Epic) or was threatened with destruction.⁶³ Esarhaddon describes the gods fleeing their statues like birds in *Asarh. episode 8*: *ilū ištarātu āšib libbišu iḫḫūriš ipparšuma elū šamamiš*, “the gods and goddesses living within fled to heaven above like birds.” This recalls Yahweh’s abandonment of the Jerusalemite temple in Ezek 10:18–19.

However, the nexus between statue and deity could also be maliciously disrupted, as we see in the following unique text from Assurbanipal. When the Assyrian king destroyed the temples and statues of Elamite Susa, the gods became like disembodied spirits: “I desecrated the sanctuaries of Elam and counted their gods and goddesses as powerless ghosts” (*ilīšu ištarātišu amna ana zaqiqī*; 54 vi 62–64).⁶⁴

The presupposition here is of an almost Aristotelian dualism of body and soul, so that the destruction of the body (i.e., cult statue) leaves the deity a disembodied *zaqiqu* “ghost.” This explanation of the relationship between the cult image and the deity (as body to the soul) was particularly prevalent among the later neo-Platonist iconodules (see the Fifth Oration of the Emperor Julian and the Olympic Discourse of the second-century Dio Chrysostom).⁶⁵

King Nabû-apla-iddina of Babylon (ca. 887–855 B.C.E.) described his restoration of Shamash in Sippar.⁶⁶ Two centuries earlier in the time of Sim-

⁶² See Berlejung (“Washing the Mouth,” 46 n. 3) for a discussion of the conditionality of the connection between the deity and the image in Mesopotamia. H. Schutzinger (“Bild und Wesen der Gottheit im alten Mesopotamien,” in *Götterbild in Kunst und Schrift* [Studium Universale 2; Bonn: Bouvier, 1984]) prefers the phrase “equality of divine essence” because this allows the possibility of dissolving the connection. W. Lambert (*RIA* 3 s.v. “Gott B.”) stresses the conditional unity of image and deity; J. Renger (*RIA* 6 s.v. “Kultbild A.”) emphasizes the unconditional.

⁶³ D. Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra* (OBO 104; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1991).

⁶⁴ M. Streck (*Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Niniveh’s* [Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 7; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1916], 55 n. 7) translates “überantwortete ich dem Winde ...” since the normal meaning of *zaqiqu* (Totengeist) “gibt hier keinen befriedigenden Sinn.”

⁶⁵ K.-H. Bernhardt, *Gott und Bild: Ein Beitrag zur Begründung und Deutung des Bilderverbotes im Alten Testament* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1956), 29–30; J. Geffcken, “Der Bilderstreit des Heidnischen Altertums,” *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* (1916–19): 294–98.

⁶⁶ L. W. King, *Babylonian Boundary-Stones and Memorial-Tablets in the British Museum: With an Atlas of Plates* (London: British Museum, 1912), 120–27, no. XXXVI (BM 91000–91002 & 91004) iv 22–28; S. A. Rashid, “Zur Sonnentafel von Sippar,” *Berliner Jahrbuch für Vor- und*

bar-Shipak (ca. 1026–1009 B.C.E.), the Sutians had destroyed the cult image of Shamash. In the interim, the loss of the statue had been compensated for by the use of a sun disk (*nip̄hu*) as a symbolic equivalent. Humans simply could not make a god on their own! Only the gods could initiate and further the process. At long last the deity had miraculously revealed a replica to serve as the basis for restoring the long-lost cult image. Then the king commanded the priest Nabû-nadin-šum to follow this divine template to fashion the image, and the king dedicated it using the *mīs pî* ritual (IV 27).

As the above case makes clear, the approval for the very existence of the cult statue rested with the god. The appearance of the statue was likewise a godly prerogative. Mari letter M.7515 mentions an oracle to determine the appearance of the image of the deity Lā-gamāl. Even as late as Seleucid times, the making of a cult image needed divine approbation. In one text, for example, the gods Shamash, Marduk, Zababa, and Sadarnuna are asked to indicate via augury their approval of the cult statue's appearance to the carpenter and goldsmiths.⁶⁷

The Opening of the Mouth Ritual Effects Transubstantiation

The divine prerogative could not be stated more clearly than it is by King Esarhaddon, who sought to restore the Babylonian cult images destroyed by his father Sennacherib in 689 B.C.E. Esarhaddon prays to Marduk, conceding the difficulty but suggesting the cultic solution:

(14) Whose right is it, O great gods, to create gods and goddesses⁶⁸ in a place where man dare not trespass? This task of refurbishing (the statues), which you have constantly been allotting to me (by oracle), is difficult! (15) Is it the right of deaf and blind human beings who are ignorant of themselves and remain in ignorance throughout their lives? (16) The making of (images of) the gods and goddesses is your

Frühgeschichte 7 (1967): 297–309; I. Gelb, "The Date of the Cruciform Monument of Maništusu," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 8 (1949): 348 n. 12; J. Brinkman, *A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia* (Analecta orientalia 43; Rome, 1968), 348, (24.2.3), 189–90 (Brinkman defends the historicity of the stone tablet against Gelb [see n. 1159]); R. S. Ellis, *Foundation Deposits in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Yale Near Eastern Researches 2; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 105; M. T. Barrelet, *Figurines et reliefs en terre cuite de la Mésopotamie antique* (Institut français d'archéologie de Beyrouth; Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 85; Paris: Librairie orientaliste P. Geuthner, 1968), 38–39.

⁶⁷ G. J. P. McEwan, "A Seleucid Augural Request," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 70 (1981): 58–69. The quoted text is Ash. 1923.749 (Uruk).

⁶⁸ [i]t-ti man-ni DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ ba-nu-u DINGIR.MEŠ u 4iṣ-tar. Cf. the translation of B. Landsberger, *Brief des Bischofs von Esagila an König Esarhaddon* (Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Nieuwe reeks 28/VI; Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandische, 1965), 21: "Wem steht es zu, o ihr grossen Götter, Götter und Göttinnen zu schaffen ...?"

right, it is in your hands; so I beseech you, create (the gods), and in your exalted holy of holies (17) may what you yourselves have in your heart be brought about in accordance with your unalterable word. (18) Endow the skilled (*enqūti*) craftsmen (DUMU.MEŠ *ummāni*) whom you ordered to complete this task with as high an understanding as Ea, their creator. (19) Teach them skills by your exalted word; (20) make all their handiwork succeed through the craft of Ninshiku.⁶⁹

The *rites de passage*—to use A. van Gennep's nomenclature⁷⁰—from a product of human artifice to the god were affected by the consecration in the ritual commonly called the *mīs pī*, “Washing of the Mouth.”⁷¹ Without this ritual the statue was only a dead product of human artisans: “This statue cannot smell incense, drink water, or eat food without the Opening of the Mouth!”⁷²—a phrase reminiscent of Ps 135:15–18 and Jer 10:5.

The Materials, the Workers, and their Construction

The statue is composed of sacred materials that already have a cosmic disposition towards manifesting the divine.⁷³ The *mēsu* tree, the flesh of the god, vertically spans the three cosmic levels: underworld, earth, the heavens:

- 30 bright wood, (like) the spring of a stream, which is born in
 the pure Heavens, spreads out on the clean earth,
 31 your branches grow up to Heaven, Enki makes your root drink
 up pure water from the Underworld.⁷⁴

Analogously, the Eucharistic species are conceived as made from mystical substances suitable to their transubstantiation:

This food which no hunger can expel;
 This is the bread which the spirit has cooked in a holy fire;
 This is a liquid which no thirst can destroy;

⁶⁹ *Asarh.* episode 53. The god ^dNin-ši-kù (Akkadian Niššiku) is Ea (*AHw* 796b). On the writing of this late form (not found in Cassite times) see W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 148–49.

⁷⁰ A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. M. B. Vizedom and G. Cafee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

⁷¹ Our studies suggest that based on colophia it was called LUḪ.KA (Assur, Nineveh, and Sippar) and an-na ní-bi-ta tu-ud-da (Nimrud, Sultantepe, and perhaps Babylon). See Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 8–9.

⁷² *STT* 200:43 [*ša'-lam'*] *an-nu-u ina la pi-it pi-i qut-ri-in-na ul iṣ-ši-in a-ka-la ul ik-kal me-e ul i-ṣat-ti* (see *PBS* xx/i Nr. 6 1–3, duplicating *STT* 200:43). This text is in Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 141.

⁷³ Berlejung, “Geheimnis und Ereignis,” 110–11.

⁷⁴ *STT* 199; Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 130. For the role of the tree as bridge between heaven and earth, branches in the heavens, roots in the earth, see G. Conti, “Incantation de l’eau bénite et de l’encensoir et textes connexes,” *MARI* 8 (1997): 270–71.

This is the wine which the grape of a virgin's womb has brought forth.⁷⁵

Next, the statue manifests the god by virtue of the fact that it is really made by the craft deity Ea and not by earthly craftsmen. On the very first day of the two-day ritual, along the river bank, the *mīs pî* ritually distances (van Gennep's *separation*) the god/statue from the human craftsmen (*mārē ummâni*) who worked on it in the temple atelier (*bīt mummi*). Their tools are sewn up in the body of a sheep and consigned to the river, the domain of Ea. On the second day, each craftsman's hands are bound with red yarn and ritually cut off with a wooden tamarisk sword while he swears, "I did not make you, rather the craft-god made you." The cult image is ritually established as *acheiropoiētos*, "unmade by (human) hands."

Similarly, the Council of Florence (1439) professed that the priest officiates at the Eucharist *in persona Christi loquens*, "speaking in the person of Christ" (DS §1321). Thus any sinfulness of the human priest constitutes no obstacle, since it is really Christ who acts, as had been reinforced by Pope Innocent III two centuries earlier in 1208:

in quo nihil a bono maius nec a malo minus perfici credimus sacerdote;
quia non in merito consecrantis sed in verbo efficitur Creatoris et in
virtute Spiritus Sancti.

We believe that no detriment or advantage takes place from the evil or good of the priest, because [it happens] not by the merit of the consecrator but by the word of the Creator and by the strength of the Holy Spirit. (DS §794)

Medieval rituals carefully detailed the making of the Eucharistic breads: "They stress the utmost care required, the choice of reliable and properly vested servants, a clean table, total silence but for the recitation of Psalms. The fire for baking was to be quiet and controlled."⁷⁶ This is particularly evident in the Armenian and Ethiopic traditions in which the priests normally bake the Eucharistic breads.

The "Birth of the Statue"

P. Boden, in her 1998 doctoral dissertation from The Johns Hopkins University, provides an insightful analysis of *mīs pî* as an instance of a ritual of transition. The rite uses language of gestation and birth to recreate ritually

⁷⁵ Matthew of Rievaulx's poem ca. 1208, cited in Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 26.

⁷⁶ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 42.

the cult statue as the god. In fact, the very Sumerian title of the ritual, “For Washing the Mouth,” may allude to the action of the midwife to cleanse and open the breathing passage of the newborn at birth.

The creation of the god was a supreme act of synergy⁷⁷ between the heavens and the earth, *ina šamê ibbanu ina eršeti ibbanu*, for the statue has been produced by both human and divine artisans, [*ša*]lam [*bun*]nanē⁷⁸ *ša ilī u amēli*.⁷⁹ However, the theologically diminished role of these earthly craftsmen is best clarified in the “Mouth Washing” ritual itself and in its incantations. Despite the work of human artisans on the cult image, it remains the “work of the god.” The gods control and determine: (1) choice of the workers involved, (2) the place, (3) the time, and (4) the “birth” of the god.

1. Choice of the Artisans

The artisans who worked on the statue were to be carefully chosen. The *ummâni mudûti* should be installed⁸⁰ and fulfill ritual purity. We know from the Esarhaddon inscriptions that the *mārē ummâni mudē šipri* had to be designated by the great gods themselves; and so Esarhaddon arranged diviners in groups, “to determine the experts who should do the work and their initiation ... they ordered me to enter the *bīt mummi* in Aššur ... they indicated to me the names of the artisans (fit) for completing the work” (*Asarh.* §53, 22–25). The statue in a real sense, as Berlejung emphasizes, is divine from the moment of its construction, at least proleptically even prior to the *mīs pî*, which completes its separation from the human and installs it in its house.

2. Place of “Rebirth”

The work on the image was done in the temple *bīt mummi* (*TuL* 27, lines 10, 1', 37'), also called *ašar ilu innepšu* (DÜ-u) in a ritual tablet,⁸¹ which is probably the equivalent of Esarhaddon's “where the gods are created” (*ašar nabnīt ilū innepšūma*; *Asarh.* §53, p. 88 line 13). Some of the ritual

⁷⁷ Berlejung's *inspirative Zusammenarbeit* in “Washing the Mouth,” 45.

⁷⁸ Although *bunnanû* usually means “appearance” or “Gestalt” here it seems to mean “product” (from *banû*, “to build”). The Sumerian *níg.dím.dím.ma* can mean “product” (see *CAD* N 2:212). “Shape” would not really make sense here. See “Creation of the gods, work of humans” (25b 59) in H. C. Rawlinson, *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, vol. 4 (London, 1891), text 25b.

⁷⁹ Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 138: 54ab and 139: 58ab.

⁸⁰ *TuL* 27, lines 18–19; Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 233.

⁸¹ See H. Zimmern, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion*, vol. 2, *Ritualtafeln für Wahrsager, Beschwörer und Sänger* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1901), text 31, line 23.

TuL 27 from Aššur seems to have taken place in an area denoted by the Sumerogram TÙR, which can denote the birthing hut.

3. Time of “Rebirth”

The sacral menology governed the making of the cult image and apparently its refurbishing. The work was done *ina ūmi magri*, “on a favorable day,” which recalls the beginnings of both the Ninevite and Babylonian versions of the ritual tablet of *mīs pī* and also Esarhaddon’s rededication of the Babylonian images, “in a favorable month, on a propitious day”⁸² The time would be determined both by calender and by divination.⁸³

4. The Birth of the God: the Ultimate šipri ili

In Mesopotamian ritual the cult image was ultimately not a product of human craft (*pace* Second Isaiah) but was born of the gods.⁸⁴ Although more elaborately affected in the normal *mīs pī* rituals, in *TuL* 27 this is suggested by the role of the birth goddess Bēlet-ilī and her brick (lines 42–43, 10’):⁸⁵ “The brick is the brick structure on which a woman lay for her labour.”⁸⁶ Elsewhere she is called ^dtibira.dingir.re.ne.ka, “Copper-caster of the gods.”⁸⁷ Around her stand the craftsmen who are now reduced to mere midwives. The three troughs of blood mentioned in the Ninevite Ritual Tablet (line 116) may allude to birth blood. Thus the renewal of the “work of the god” is understood as a “birthing process.” When Esarhaddon refers to the refurbishing of Bel, Beltiyya, Babili, Ea, Madanu, he says they were “ceremoniously born” (*ke-niš im-ma-al-du-ma*).⁸⁸

The use of forms of (*w*)*alādu* for the making of cult statues has occasioned a disagreement between R. Borger and B. Landsberger on the precise connotation of (*w*)*alādu*. Borger⁸⁹ argues that this verb can simply mean “to make, to craft” as well as “to give birth.” Therefore he translates

⁸² *ina arḫi šalmi ūmi šemē* (*Asarh.* §53 27).

⁸³ See R. Labat, *Un calendrier babylonien des travaux des signes et des mois* (séries *iqqur ipuś*) (Paris: H. Champion, 1965), 91 no. 3.

⁸⁴ J. Waghorne in her article in my 1999 volume *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth* sees a similar theologoumenon in the dedication rituals for the divine image in contemporary south India.

⁸⁵ Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 235–37.

⁸⁶ Lambert and Millard, *Atra-ḫasīs*, 153.

⁸⁷ T. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 107 n. 135. For literature on this goddess, see R. Biggs, *Šà.Zi.Ga, Ancient Mesopotamian Potency Incantations* (Texts from Cuneiform Sources 2; Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1967), 45; J. Krecher, *Sumerische Kultlyrik* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966), 199.

⁸⁸ *Asarh.* §53 line 35.

⁸⁹ *Asarh.* 83, n. 35.

it “*geboren*,” always using the quotation marks. On the other hand, Landsberger⁹⁰ objects to this “rational” approach; the context would support the more mythical understanding “were born”: “In our late passages it is always a case of the mythological sphere and is to be separated completely from cases involving the verb *epēšu/šūpušu* (“to make/have made”) ... Basically we have here the concept of an organic generation and growth, not of creation through magic of the word (as in *Enūma Eliš* IV 26).”⁹¹ The context would seem to support Landsberger’s argument. This becomes especially clear when we study the *mīs pî* ritual—particularly in the Babylonian rite BM 45749.⁹² In line 23 the *egubbû*-basin is placed “on the brick stand of Dingirmaḥ” (*libitti ša Dingirmaḥ*). This cult action recalls a similar passage in *Atraḥasīs* where Mami (or Bēlet-kala-ilī) creates mankind on a “brick structure ... on which women performed their labour.”⁹³ From this *mīs pî* rite Ebeling concludes that “the new god becomes by this process the child of the Mother Goddesses.”⁹⁴ Therefore the concept of “birth,” of a real theogony, is quite strong in the enlivening of Mesopotamian images.

Although Sumerian texts frequently use the sign *tu(d)* “to give birth” in reference to statues,⁹⁵ this evidence is somewhat more controversial in that some scholars would prefer to read the same sign as *ku₄* (*ku₉*) “to bring in”; thus the word would refer to the introduction of the statue into the shrine. However, the earliest use of the Sumerogram (Ur III) clearly decides the matter in favor of *tu(d)* “to give birth,” since at that time Sumerian differentiated the signs *tu(d)* and *ku₄*. An inscription on statue A of Gudea (ca. 2200 B.C.E.) clearly differentiates these two verbs:

| | |
|-----|--------------------------------------------|
| 2:6 | kur-ma ₂ -gan ^{ki} -ta |
| 3:1 | na ⁴ esi im-ta-e ₁₁ |
| 3:2 | alan-na-ni-šē |
| 3:3 | mu-tu |
| | ... |
| 4:4 | é-a mu-na-ni-ku ₄ |

From the land of Magan he (Gudea) imported *esi*-stone and (from it) gave birth to his statue ... he brought it for him (the God) into the temple.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Landsberger, *Brief des Bischofs*, 24–25, n. 38. See Borger’s rebuttal in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 29 (1972): 36.

⁹¹ Translation M. Dick.

⁹² Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 75.

⁹³ Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Ḥasīs*, 61–62, 153.

⁹⁴ E. Ebeling, *Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellung der Babylonier* (Berlin: Gruyter, 1931), 111.

⁹⁵ Spycket, *Les Statues de culte*, 37.

⁹⁶ In some inscriptions the phrase *mu-na-ni-ku₄* is given in another version as *mu-na-ni-DU*; *DU* here means “to install.” See H. Steible, *Die neusumerischen Bau- und Weihinschriften*, vol. 1, *Inschriften*

Furthermore, such incantations as lines 3 and 42 of the Babylonian ritual “Born in heaven of its own power” (an-na ní-bi-ta tu-ud-da-a) make it clear that tu(d) “to be born” is intended.⁹⁷ This bilingual incantation (an-na ní-bi-ta tu-ud-da-àm) was recited on both days of the two-day ritual;⁹⁸ in fact in Nimrud, Babylon, and Sultantepe this was the title of the total ritual, named after the incipit of the first incantation on the first tablet:

- | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1–2 | Incantation: in Heaven it is born of itself; ⁹⁹ |
| 3–4 | on earth it is born of itself. ¹⁰⁰ |
| 5 | In Heaven it is complete; on earth it is complete. ¹⁰¹ |

The first version on day one had focused on Ea as its father. The same “rebirth” (transubstantiation) is expressed in the Akkadian prayer, which is actually given in the text of the Nineveh Ritual (NR ¹⁰²) and not by incipit:

- | | |
|----|----------------------------------------------------|
| 61 | From today you go before Ea your father, |
| 62 | Let your heart be pleased, let your mind be happy. |
| 63 | May Ea, your father, be full of joy with you. |

These texts are recited three times. On the second day the variation of the incantation is alam an-né ù-tu-ud-da (NR 190), which then continues to mention the mothers of the god (e.g., the Tigris, Bēlet-ilī, Nin-ḫur-sag).

The priest then whispers the following affirmation into the god’s left ear (165–72):

des II. Dynastie von Lagaš (Freiburger Altorientalische Studien 9.1; Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1991), 4–5. See also Uringirsu II, lines 2:1–7 for a similar contrast.

⁹⁷ I. Winter (“‘Idols of the King’: Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 6 [1992]: 21) has called attention to the fact that the Sumerian verb *dím* “to craft” is used of cult paraphernalia, stela, etc., but tu(d) “to give birth” is used of ‘making’ statues. This distinction, however, cannot be insisted upon too rigorously, since many of the *mīs pī* incantations do in fact refer to the cult statue as *dím* “crafted”: *én u₄ dingir dí-ma*, “Incantation: day on which the God was crafted” (Nineveh Ritual tablet, line 160 = *STT* 200:1, Sumerian version). Berlejung (“Washing the Mouth,” 53) objects to making too much of this because the Akkadian (mis)translates it “the heavens were created” and not the statue. However, in view of the incipit for Nineveh Ritual 190 (*alam ki-kù-ga-ta ù-tu-ud-da* ...) it clearly refers to the statue’s birth in heaven.

⁹⁸ This text, whose incipit is found in the Babylonian Ritual Tablet, line 3, is taken from *STT* 199:1–12.

⁹⁹ The Akkadian translation is: “the heavens were born of themselves.” Note the singular form *ibbani*, where plural *ibbanû* is expected.

¹⁰⁰ The Akkadian translation is: “the earth was born of itself.”

¹⁰¹ The Akkadian, “Heaven is my spring, earth is my spring” (reading the Sumerian *til* as *idim*), must have meant that heaven and earth were the sources of the water for the priest’s washing.

¹⁰² NR refers to the Nineveh Ritual, found in Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 33–67. Citations refer to the line numbers in this critical edition.

You are counted among your brother gods,
 from today may your destiny be counted as divinity,
 with your brother gods you are counted,
 approach the king who knows your voice;
 approach your temple;
 to the land/mountain where you were created be released.

This organic origin of the image is furthered by the incantation è-a-zu-dè è-a-zu-dè gal-a (*STT* 199).¹⁰³ Although the verb è can be translated “to go out” as in fact Berlejung translates it, we now have a bilingual text which reads Sumerian è as Akkadian *šâhu*, “to grow.” Thus the incantation refers to the statue’s growing up in a pure, heavenly forest (cf. Isa 44:14). The theology is best summarized in an incantation (u₄ dingir dím-ma alam sikil-la šu du₇-a) that is recited on the second day of the ritual in the temple orchard. The *āšipu*-priest stands on the left-side of the god and whispers the following *šu-illa* prayer (one of five):¹⁰⁴

- 49ab Incantation: when the god was fashioned, the pure statue
 completed,
 50ab the god¹⁰⁵ appeared in all the lands,
 51ab bearing an awe-inspiring halo, he is adorned with lordliness;
 lordly, he is all pride;¹⁰⁶
 52ab surrounded with splendor, endowed with an awesome appear-
 ance,
 53ab it appeared magnificently, the statue shone brilliant;
 54ab it was made in the heavens, it was made on earth.
 55ab This statue was made in the entire heavens and earth;
 56ab this statue grew up in a forest of *hašur*-cedar;
 57ab this statue went out from a mountain, a pure place;
 58ab the statue is the product of gods and humans;¹⁰⁷
 69ab this statue which Ninkurra, Ninagal, Kusibanda, Ninildu,
 Ninzadim have made,
 70ab this statue cannot smell incense without the “Opening of the
 Mouth” ceremony.
 71ab It cannot eat food nor drink water.

As a late witness to this theologoumenon, Minucius Felix (*Octavius* xxii:5), a Latin author who wrote in the late-second or early-third century of the Common Era, refers to a statue as *nascitur*, “being born”:

¹⁰³ Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 115.

¹⁰⁴ For this text see Incantation Tablet 3 in Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 135–44.

¹⁰⁵ In the Akkadian: the gods (plural).

¹⁰⁶ See CAD E 382a.

¹⁰⁷ Or “has the features of both”



Fig. 3.5. Miracle of the Child in the Host Revealed to Edward the Confessor from f. 21r of Ee. 3. 59. Used with permission of the Cambridge University Library.

Nisi forte nondum deus saxum est vel lignum vel argentum. Quando igitur hic nascitur? Ecce funditur, fabricatur, sculpitur: nondum deus est; ecce plumbatur, construitur, erigitur: nec adhuc deus est; ecce ornatur, consecratur, oratur: tunc postremo deus est, cum homo illum voluit et dedicavit.

Say you the stone, or wood, or silver is not yet a god? When then does he come to the birth? See him cast, molded, sculptured—not yet is he a god; see him soldered, assembled, and set up—still not a god; see him bedizened, consecrated, worshiped; hey, presto! he is a god—by a man’s will and the act of dedication.

To return to our model of Eucharistic transubstantiation, I could not find the motif of heavenly “birth” used of the Eucharistic presence; however, it is implied in frequent medieval comparisons between the Eucharist and Jesus’ virginal conception in Mary, the Christian equivalent here of Bēlet-ilī. Rubin explains:¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 142.

In vernacular literature a strong bond was created between the eucharistic body reborn at the mass and the original body born from a virgin womb, to produce the powerful image linked both to the crucifixion and to nativity in the Virgin Mary.

We even have medieval monstrances for exhibition of the consecrated Eucharistic bread in which the window was placed in the position of the womb of an iconic Mary.¹⁰⁹ The motif of the miraculous Baby Jesus in the Eucharist also plays on this comparison, as we have seen in the accompanying mid-thirteenth century illustration from the Miracle of the Child in the Host Revealed to Edward the Confessor (fig. 3.5).¹¹⁰

Summary

My use of the sacramental Eucharistic analogy in this paper attempts to “familiarize” the reader. It is important for the modern scholar to appreciate that what the ancient Near Eastern *āšipu* attempted with the Washing of the Mouth ritual was theologically comparable to the Eucharistic liturgy in the Roman and Orthodox tradition: Both seek to make the divine efficaciously present in material substrates.

¹⁰⁹ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 145.

¹¹⁰ Cambridge University Library, MS. Ee. 3. 59 fol. 21r, used with permission.

Chapter Four

Syro-Palestinian Iconography and Divine Images

Theodore J. Lewis

The 1970s saw the use of a new tool for the study of the Syro-Palestinian world: iconography. In 1972 O. Keel's *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (now in its fifth German edition) offered a massively detailed study of how visual symbols could supplement the written text. Biblical scholars had utilized iconography prior to this time,¹ especially those with knowledge of Mesopotamian glyptic art. Yet systematic studies were rare in a discipline that preferred philology and theology to the worlds of archaeology and art history.

Keel's work on the Psalms was a systematic attempt at blending literary and visual symbols to unpack the conceptual world of the biblical author. Moreover, as keenly as Keel recognized the contributions of iconography, he was aware of its limitations and the chance of misinterpretation. He would write, "we constantly run the risk of reading these pictures too concretely, or having avoided that risk, of treating them too abstractly."² Of course, the same can be said of analyzing a text. At least iconographic representations are easier to fix in historical context than the biblical material that emerges from a long editorial process.

Keel continued his impact in the 1980s, the 1990s, and now in the present decade. Scholars associated with his "Fribourg School" (e.g., U. Winter, S. Schroer, T. Staubli, I. Cornelius, and especially C. Uehlinger) have turned out numerous volumes (mostly in the OBO series), including exhaustive studies of the often overlooked seals and amulets.³

¹ See, for example, the works of H. Gressmann, *Altorientalische Texte und Bilder zum Alten Testament* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1926–27) and J. B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

² O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 9.

³ For the numerous volumes in the *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* (OBO) series, see www.unifr.ch/dbs/

Whereas Keel's initial offering was broadly construed (covering conceptions of the cosmos, destructive forces, the temple, conceptions of God, the king, and humans before God), his more recent work, including several co-authored works with C. Uehlinger and M. Bernett, thoroughly documents divine images, male and female. Especially noteworthy in this area is Keel and Uehlinger's *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, Bernett and Keel's *Mond, Stier und Kult am Stadttor: Die Stele von Betsaida*, and Keel's *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh*.⁴ It is a very good sign indeed when one now finds articles on art and iconography in standard reference works such as the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, or the *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*.⁵ Such would have been rare just a generation ago.

The future holds great promise especially as the Fribourg school continues its amazing productivity. And yet, iconographic study is no longer restricted to the Fribourg school. Of recent note is T. N. D. Mettinger's study of standing stones, *No Graven Image?*, *The Image and the Book*, edited by K. van der Toorn, and *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth*, edited by M. Dick.⁶

Historians of religion have ignored iconography at their own peril. In what follows I attempt to assess the state of the field as it pertains

publication_obo.html. On using seals for reconstructing ancient Israelite religion, see too N. Avigad, "The Contribution of Hebrew Seals to an Understanding of Israelite Religion and Society," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 195–208.

⁴ O. Keel and C. Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998); M. Bernett and O. Keel, *Mond, Stier und Kult am Stadttor: Die Stele von Betsaida* (OBO 161; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1998); O. Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 261; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998). Most recently see I. Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess: The Iconography of the Syro-Palestinian Goddesses Anat, Astarte, Qadesh, and Asherah c. 1500–1000 BCE* (OBO 204; Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2004). This study arrived too late to be incorporated fully into the present article.

⁵ O. Keel, "Iconography and the Bible," *ABD* 3:358–74; A. Caubet, "Art and Architecture in Canaan and Ancient Israel," *CANE* 4:2671–91. See also *CANE* 4 (Part 10) on "Visual and Performing Arts" and A. Green, "Ancient Mesopotamian Religious Iconography," *CANE* 3:1837–55. See I. Cornelius, "The Iconography of Ugarit," and N. Wyatt, "The Religion of Ugarit: An Overview," in *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, ed. W. G. E. Watson and N. Wyatt (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 586–602 and 580–83, respectively.

⁶ T. N. D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism and Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1995); K. van der Toorn, ed., *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 21; Leuven: Peeters, 1997); M. B. Dick, ed., *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999). See too Z. Bahrani, *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

to Syria-Palestine. I restrict my remarks to the iconography of divine images. Therefore, I do not survey cult images in general, such as golden mice (1 Sam 6:4, 11), a bronze sea (1 Kgs 6:23), Jachin and Boaz (1 Kgs 7:21), *kernoi* and zoomorphic vessels, or even pomegranate scepters from Jerusalem.⁷

Ancient Israel is well-known for its aniconic tradition. Yet some parts of Israelite society also had an iconic tradition. As Uehlinger writes, “on the whole, the notion of ‘Ancient Israel’ as an ‘aniconic nation’ is erroneous ... Had ‘Israel’ not known images, no veto would ever have been conceived⁸ ... The prohibition of cultic images ... presupposes the knowledge and practice of iconolatry in at least some circles of Judahite society.”⁹

Pitfalls

Lack of Use of Material Culture

Advances in iconographic study have not been without their pitfalls. The primary hazard continues to be textual scholars who do not take iconography seriously. With regard to cultic images, Keel and Uehlinger’s quote is apt: “Anyone who prefers to work exclusively with texts ... ought to get little or no hearing.”¹⁰

Current analysis of Syro-Palestinian deities is uneven and, without accompanying inscriptions, identifications will remain uncertain. Thanks to renewed interest in Asherah, almost every other female figurine is attributed to her, including her alleged presence on the Taanach cult stand (fig. 4.1), the Lachish ewer, and at Kuntillet Ajrud.¹¹ Anat’s fascinating role in

⁷ The study of semiotics is very important for understanding the biblical notion of legitimate versus illegitimate images. See M. Halbertal and A. Margalit, *Idolatry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), and C. D. Evans, “Cult Images, Royal Policies and the Origins of Aniconism,” in *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström*, ed. S. W. Holloway and L. K. Handy (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 192–212. Such scholars use C. S. Peirce’s semiotics to describe the nature of representation of the divine. In short, biblical tradition forbids similarity-based representations of God, but it allows metonymic representations.

⁸ C. Uehlinger, “Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals, Iconography and Syro-Palestinian Religions of Iron Age II: Some Afterthoughts and Conclusions,” in *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals*, ed. B. Sass and C. Uehlinger (OBO 125; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1993), 281.

⁹ C. Uehlinger, “Arad, Qitmit—Judahite Aniconism vs. Edomite Iconic Cult? Questioning the Evidence,” forthcoming in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. G. Beckman and T. J. Lewis (Brown Judaic Studies).

¹⁰ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 11.

¹¹ The bibliography on Asherah is overwhelmingly large. For a good overview, see J. M. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).



Fig. 4.1. The bottom register of the terracotta tenth-century B.C.E. Taanach cult stand depicts a nude female holding lions by the ears. Scholars commonly identify her as the goddess Asherah. The presence of the cherub, calf (some say horse) and sun images suggest to some that Yahweh is depicted on the stand, but this is questionable. Courtesy Israel Museum, Jerusalem.



Fig. 4.2. A lid of an ivory round box from Late Bronze Age Ugarit (Minet el Beida) depicting "the mistress of animals." Courtesy Mission to Ras Shamra-Ougarit.

Fig. 4.1. The bottom register of the terracotta tenth-century B.C.E. Taanach cult stand depicts a nude female holding lions by the ears. Scholars commonly identify her as the goddess Asherah. The presence of the cherub, calf (some say horse) and sun images suggest to some that Yahweh is depicted on the stand, but this is questionable. Courtesy Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

Ugaritic myth leaves no wonder why textual studies of her role, function, sexuality and status outnumber iconographic analysis.¹² And yet, P. Day has equated Anat's role as mistress of animals with the famous ivory pyxis lid (fig. 4.2) and the golden pendant (fig. 4.3), both from Minet el Beida.¹³

In contrast, Cornelius uses Egyptian inscribed iconography to argue that Anat is a warrior goddess (fig. 4.4)¹⁴ and that it is Qudshu who is the "Mistress of Animals."¹⁵ As noted by N.

¹² E.g., N. Walls, *The Goddess Anat in Ugaritic Myth* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

¹³ P. Day, "Anat: Ugarit's 'Mistress of Animals'," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 51 (1992): 187–90.

¹⁴ I. Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess*, 21–22, 92–93, 104; idem, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al: Late Bronze and Iron Age I Periods (ca. 1500–1000 BCE)* (OBO 140; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1994), 73–77, figs. 14, 15; idem, "Anat and Qudshu as the 'Mistress of Animals': Aspects of the Iconography of the Canaanite Goddesses," *Studi epigrafici e linguistici* 10 (1993): 21–45. Compare Athtartu's association with horses. In addition to Cornelius, see D. Pardee's remarks in "Ugaritic Dream Omens," *COS* 1:294 n. 5.

¹⁵ Cornelius, "Anat and Qudshu," 29–33. Several Ugaritic texts (*KTU* 1.16.1.11, 21–22; 1.2.1.21;



Fig. 4.3. Gold pendant from Late Bronze Age Ugarit (Minet el Beida) depicting a nude female with Hathor-stylized hair holding gazelles by their feet. Serpents are at her waist, their tails descending alongside her legs. She is standing on what appears to be a lion. Courtesy Mission to Ras Shamra-Ugarit.



Fig. 4.4. A situla supposedly from the time of Psammetichus I depicting the goddess Anat wielding a mace/axe with her left hand and holding a spear and shield in her right hand. Courtesy *Orbis biblicus et orientalis*, from I. Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess*, fig. 4.

Wyatt, the uninscribed Michaelidis stela also depicts Anat (fig. 4.5), yet its questionable history (the original is now lost) demands that it, though famous, be set aside.¹⁶

The iconography of other Syro-Palestinian deities gets far less attention. We study the role of (pre-)Israelite El in text, yet pay little attention to possible reflexes in archaeology such as the enthroned male figurines in benedictory pose coming from sites such as Beth Shemesh, Megiddo, Beth-Shean, Tel Kinneret and Tell Balâṭah. The rich documentation of Ugaritic El can serve as a proper backdrop, be it for anthropomorphic (see below, fig. 4.18) or theriomorphic speculation.¹⁷

1.2.3.20) have been used to document a goddess Qudshu (= Asherah?). Yet it is preferable to see *qdš* as a title of El ("the Holy One"). It would be more likely to have a feminine form (*qdšt*) if the goddess was meant. See N. Wyatt, "Asherah," in *DDD* 100; idem, *Religious Texts from Ugarit: The Words of Ilmilku and His Colleagues* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 54 n. 78; and S. Wiggins, "The Myth of Asherah: Lion Lady and Serpent Goddess," *UF* 23 (1991): 386–89. Note especially *KTU* 1.14.4.34, where the syntax and poetic structure requires that King Kirta is arriving "at the sanctuary of Asherah of Tyre." This is not to deny the presence of Qudshu in Egypt. Yet Egyptian iconography (especially the plaque published by I. E. S. Edwards, "A Relief of Qudshu-Astarte-Anat in the Winchester College Collection," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 14 [1955]: 49–51, pl. III) should not be privileged in reconstructing the Ugaritic pantheon.

¹⁶ See I. Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess*, 22 and figure 3; P. Day, "Anat," *DDD* 1999: 39.

¹⁷ See T. J. Lewis, "Ugaritic El and Israelite El in Text and Iconography," forthcoming in *UF*.



Fig. 4.5. A well-known uninscribed stela depicting the goddess Anat. Though now lost, it once was a part of the Michaélidis collection in Cairo. Courtesy of The Hebrew University Magnes Press.

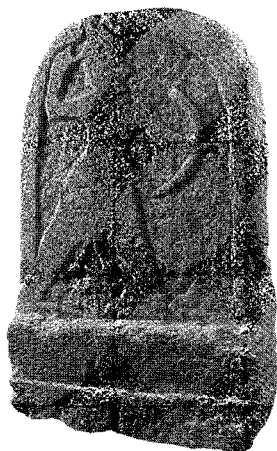


Fig. 4.7. A Late Bronze Age limestone stela from Ugarit with a divine archer, perhaps the god Reshef. Courtesy Mission to Ras Shamra-Ougarit.



Fig. 4.6. A Bes figurine carved in ivory from Late Bronze Age Megiddo. Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.



Fig. 4.8. The so-called Mekal Stela comes from the cultic complex in Stratum IXA at Beth-Shean (fourteenth century B.C.E.). It depicts a cultic scene with an Egyptian official in front of the Canaanite deity Mekal. From A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 289, fig. 733.

Conversely, there are textual scholars who attempt to study iconography, yet cannot extract themselves from a textual myopia.¹⁸ Suffering from textual fixation, we ignore some deities owing to their absence in written sources, yet we know of their presence owing to material culture. Bes figurines (fig. 4.6) are ubiquitous and had a significant impact upon domestic religion, yet they are understudied because we are so text-centered.¹⁹ Similarly, Reshef (fig. 4.7) appears rarely in the Ugaritic mythological texts or the Hebrew Bible. Yet his presence is well attested in the ritual texts,²⁰ and, as Cornelius has shown, there were very many private stelae devoted to him,²¹ not to mention the inscribed lion-headed mug offered to Rashap-Guni.²² The Canaanite god Mekal appears on an inscribed stela from Beth-Shean (fig. 4.8)²³ but not in our mythic repertoire. The Bethsaida stela (as shown by Burnett and Keel²⁴) reveals a greater presence for the moon god (note too that not all bulls are Hadad or Baal; fig. 4.9). Thus the field looks with great anticipation for the publication of an iconographic counterpart to Brill's *Dictionary of Deities and Demons*.²⁵

Limitations of What We Possess

Yet using iconography has its own pitfalls, such as the limitations inherent in the nature of material culture. Archaeology does not document everything. Biblical writers speak of dragons yet to be found in Iron Age Israel.²⁶ To what degree can iconography represent actual cult? Can iconography adequately reflect ritual activity?

¹⁸ For example, A. Caquot and M. Sznycer's *Ugaritic Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), which appears in the Groningen Iconography of Religions series, has little analysis of the iconography.

¹⁹ Now see C. Herrmann, *Ägyptische Amulette aus Palästina/Israel* (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1994, 2002).

²⁰ Now see D. Pardee, *Les textes rituels* (Ras Shamra-Ougarit XII; Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 2000) and *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit* (WAW 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002).

²¹ Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al*.

²² M. Yon, *La cité d'Ougarit sur le tell de Ras Shamra* (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1997), 158–59, and *KTU* 6.62.

²³ A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1990), 289.

²⁴ Burnett and Keel, *Mond, Stier und Kult am Stadttor*. See too T. Ornan, who argues that the Bethsaida stela reveals “a certain ambiguity.” She concludes that we may have a “storm deity with lunar features” rather than “a moon god with ‘storm’ attributes.” T. Ornan, “The Bull and its Two Masters: Moon and Storm Deities in Relation to the Bull in Ancient Near Eastern Art,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 51.1 (2001): 24–25.

²⁵ Tentatively titled *Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Biblical World* (IDD), edited by C. Uehlinger.

²⁶ The absence of certain artifacts is owing to both the lack of (and poverty of) production in Iron Age Israel and the nature of the archaeological enterprise.



Fig. 4.9. The Iron Age II bull-headed stela found in a gate shrine at Bethsaida is thought to represent the moon god. Courtesy Bethsaida Excavations Project.

Note Cornelius's claim, that iconographic depictions "can fulfill a role comparable to the texts from Ugarit." V. Hurowitz rightly challenges this by noting that whereas "purely iconographic analysis" shows that a raised hand is a symbol of power, "only the texts describing Reshef as a god who listens to prayers and who heals inform us that Reshef's power is an apotropaic power—an ability to ward off disease."²⁷

Iconography complements texts, it cannot replace them. The portrait of *transcendent* Baal (to use the words of Wyatt²⁸) in *KTU* 1.101 cannot be crafted in stone or metal. (Yet neither is iconography "impotent."²⁹ See below for the transcendence achieved by the artists at Ayn Dara.)

Misuse of Material Culture

The misuse of material culture is legendary. Why must every item coming out of the ground be cultic rather than domestic in nature? One need only remember failed

past attempts turning house pillars and stone tables into cultic *maššēbôt*. Mettinger's *No Graven Image?* is a splendid correction. And yet, according to Mettinger, *maššēbôt* are cultic in nature, representing divine images. While some *maššēbôt* may indeed represent divine images (such as those at Arad), most were probably commemorative in nature (e.g., the *maššēbāh* at Tirzah). Nowhere in Mettinger's treatment does one come across *maššēbôt* functioning as a tombstone (for Rachel, Gen 35:19–20), as a boundary marker (between Jacob and Laban, Gen 31:44–49), as markers for twelve tribes (Exod 24:3–8) and as a surrogate for a male heir (2 Sam 18:18).³⁰ Every group of standing stones does *not* necessarily document a pantheon.

²⁷ I. Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al*, 264. V. Hurowitz, "Picturing Imageless Deities. Iconography in the Ancient Near East," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 23.3 (1997): 69.

²⁸ Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 388–90.

²⁹ Hurowitz, "Picturing Imageless Deities," 69.

³⁰ For the latter, see J. C. de Moor, "Standing Stones and Ancestor Worship," *UF* 27 (1995): 1–20.



Fig. 4.10. Three of the numerous so-called pillar figurines. Scholars debate whether these are cult images of a goddess (perhaps Asherah) or a cult object used in some type of sympathetic magic rite. Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.



Fig. 4.11. This Iron Age II terracotta figurine depicts a woman with a circular shaped object that is most likely a frame drum of some kind. Courtesy of the Harvard Semitic Museum.

Using material culture to show the empty space aniconism of Yahweh is also a hard proposition. J. G. Taylor argued for such using the Taanach cult stand with its cherub, horse and sun images (fig. 4.1). Yet Keel and Uehlinger associate the horses with Anat-Astarte, the cherubs with guardians, and the solar disk with the heavens.³¹ The empty space on tier three could have had a purely functional and/or artistic purpose.³²

Misidentifications

In contrast to inscribed Egyptian material (such as the Anat material above and the Winchester plaque mentioning Qudshu-Anat-Astarte; see note 15), rarely do inscriptions accompany Syro-Palestinian figures. That the pillar

³¹ J. G. Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun* (JSOTSup 111; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 24–37; J. G. Taylor, “Was Yahweh Worshipped as the Sun?” *Biblical Archaeological Review* 20.3 (=May/June 1994) pp. 52–61, 90–91; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 157–60. On Anat and Athtartu (= Astarte) see note 14 above.

³² See T. J. Lewis, “Divine Images and Aniconism in Ancient Israel,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118.1 (1998): 49–50, which includes bibliography on various cult stands.



Fig. 4.12. A drinking mug from Late Bronze Age Ugarit found in the so-called house of the magician priest in the south acropolis. The decoration depicts an offering scene before an enthroned bearded individual, perhaps the deity El. The officiant could be the king. The horse, fish and bird seem to symbolize land, sea and air. Restored drawing by C. Florimont. Courtesy Mission to Ras Shamra-Ougarit.

figurines (fig. 4.10) were consistently labeled “Astarte” figurines in the past should give us pause when today we consistently call them “Asherah” figurines.³³ Despite C. Meyers’ work to the contrary, scholars persist in labeling the so-called “tambourine” figurines (fig. 4.11) as Asherah.³⁴ The desire is strong to interpret every object coming out of the ground as cultic. But the ancients had domestic lives, too.

Misidentification is a problem even when we are relatively certain that we are dealing with cultic items. Note, for example, the drinking mug (fig. 4.12) from the southern acropolis at Ugarit portraying an enthroned bearded figure (arguably the deity El). The offering scene depicts an attendant holding a libation jug. Owing to the ritual nature of the scene, it is not surprising that C. Schaeffer, M. Pope, and others equated the scene with El’s *marzēah*. Yet Pope did not stop there. He argued (prior to its restoration) that the personage to the left was the goddess Asherah. The horse, fish and fowl represented the donkey of Asherah, the watery domain of El, and the bird-like character of Anat.³⁵ It makes more sense to follow Yon in seeing the personage to the left as a human male (perhaps the king³⁶). The horse,

³³ See R. Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-figurines and the Archaeology of Asherah* (BAR International Series 636; Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1996); D. Gilbert-Peretz, “Ceramic Figurines,” in *Excavations at the City of David 1978–1985*, vol. 4, ed. D. T. Ariel and A. de Groot (Qedem 35; Jerusalem: Hebrew University), 29–41 (plus Appendix A, pp. 42–84).

³⁴ See Lewis, “Divine Images and Aniconism in Ancient Israel,” 45–46 and bibliography therein.

³⁵ M. H. Pope, *Probative Pontificating in Ugaritic and Biblical Literature*, ed. M. S. Smith (Ugaritisch-Biblische Literatur 10; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994), 21–23.

³⁶ Yon, *La cité d’Ougarit sur le tell de Ras Shamra*, 156. Cf. KTU 1.14.2.6–26; KTU 1.119.13–16: “A flame-sacrifice (ʾurm) and a presentation sacrifice (šnpt) the king must offer (at) the temple

fish and fowl more likely represent land, sea and air³⁷.

Some scholars would include the female seated lyre-player on Kuntillet Ajrud pithos A (mid-ninth to mid-eighth century B.C.E.) as representing the goddess Asherah.³⁸ This seems inadvisable. There is no association of Asherah with music, nor would one expect to find the great mother goddess off-center, facing away from the central figures. Those who reason that we have Asherah on the throne do so owing to the inscription, which mentions “Yahweh of Samaria and his asherah.” Yet there is no need to equate the drawings with the inscription, especially if they come from two separate times as seems likely.³⁹ If the drawings and the inscription are contemporaneous and thus represent the same subject matter, how would those who place Asherah on the throne account for the presence of *three* figures?

Mettinger identifies Leviathan with the picture of the Egyptian crocodile in figure 4.13.⁴⁰ It seems better (until an Iron Age Israelite artifact surfaces) to imagine the seven-headed Leviathan along the lines of the dragon portrayals from Tell Asmar (fig. 4.14), as well as the Early Dynastic plaque depicted in figure 4.15.

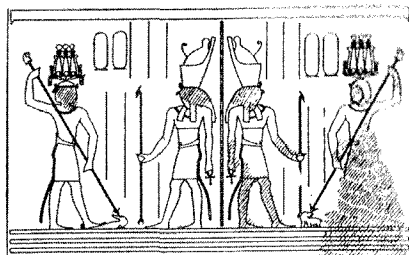


Fig. 4.13. A scene from the temple in Edfu that depicts the god Horus and the pharaoh hunting both a hippopotamus and a crocodile. Owing to the mention of God defeating both Behemoth and Leviathan in Job 40–41, scholars have thought that Leviathan might be depicted here. From E. Chassinat, *Le temple d’Edfou*, vol. 3 (Cairo, 1928), fig. 82.

of ʿllu: a *npš* for ʿI[lu?], a *npš* for Baʿlu[...] and a donkey (ʿr) for [...].” See D. Pardee, “Ugaritic Prayer for a City Under Siege,” *COS* 1:284.

³⁷ So Yon, *La cité d’Ougarit sur le tell de Ras Shamra*, 156.

³⁸ W. G. Dever, “Asherah, Consort of Yahweh? New Evidence from Kuntillet ‘Ajrūd,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 255 (1984): 21–37; idem, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 144–48.

³⁹ A full critique of Dever’s position can be found in Hadley, “Yahweh and ‘His Asherah’: Archaeological and Textual Evidence for the Cult of the Goddess,” in *Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte*, ed. W. Dietrich and M. Klopfenstein (OBO 139; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1994), 245–49; idem, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 144–52. For an alternate view on the overlapping of the inscription, see now B. Schmidt, “The Iron Age Pithoi Drawings from Horvat Teman or Kuntillet ‘Ajrūd: Some New Proposals,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 2 (2002): 91–125.

⁴⁰ T. Mettinger, *In Search of God. The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 196.



Fig. 4.14. From Tell Asmar (Eshnunna) comes this depiction of two deities (or one deity in a linear sequence) attacking a seven-headed dragon. From H. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals* (London: MacMillan, 1939), pl. XXIIIj. Courtesy of The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.



Fig. 4.15. Early Dynastic plaque depicting the slaying of a seven-headed dragon by a deity. Courtesy of the Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem. J. B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1969), fig. 671.

Misdating

Other pitfalls involve misdating. G. Ahlström made much of the Hazor figurine (fig. 4.16) from area B (stratum XI; found in a jar under the floor of locus 3283), calling it “an *Israelite* god figurine” (my italics) and representing “Yahweh or Yahweh-El.”⁴¹ As noted by several scholars, a closer look at the archaeological picture shows that this figurine was part of a hoard of Late Bronze Age (i.e., thirteenth-century) implements (see fig. 4.34 below). Thus they represent earlier, pre-Israelite material culture.⁴²

Almost every other treatment of Israelite divine images shows the stick figure on a miniature limestone altar from Gezer (fig. 4.17) and *notes its tenth-century date*. Its fame comes from W. G. Dever’s often used quote that “no representations of a *male* deity in terra cotta, metal, or stone, have ever been found in clear Iron Age contexts”⁴³ except for this stick figurine. (To his credit, Dever added that it is unclear whether it represents a human or a deity.) Yet there are questions about whether it should indeed be dated to the tenth century. It is found in destruction debris that include later intrusive material from trenches 3044 and 3113. Each of these trenches contains late (even Persian) material.⁴⁴ Thus the central role that this figurine has played needs to be nuanced.

⁴¹ G. W. Ahlström, “An Israelite God Figurine from Hazor,” *Orientalia Suecana* 19–20 (1970–71): 54–62; idem, “An Israelite God Figurine, Once More,” *Vetus Testamentum* 25 (1975): 106–9.

⁴² W. G. Dever, “Material Remains and the Cult in Ancient Israel: An Essay in Archeological Systematics,” in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O’Connor (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 583.

⁴³ Dever, “Material Remains and the Cult in Ancient Israel,” 574.

⁴⁴ Here I am indebted to S. Gitin for his insights.

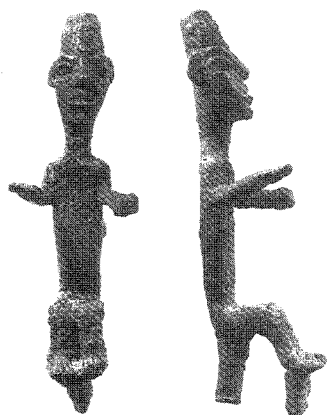


Fig. 4.16. A Late Bronze Age figurine from Hazor (Area B, Stratum XI) that some scholars have misidentified as Yahweh. Courtesy Amnon Ben-Tor and Hazor Excavations. From A. Ben-Tor, *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, fig. 8.25.

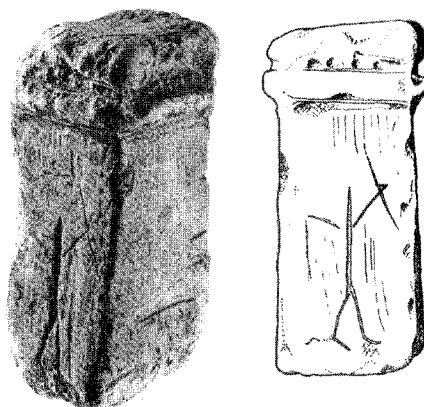


Fig. 4.17. A miniature limestone altar from Gezer thought to date to the tenth century B.C.E. Courtesy William G. Dever and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. From W. G. Dever, ed., *Gezer II: Report of the 1967–70 Seasons in Fields I and II* (Jerusalem: Hebrew Union College, 1974), pls 41.2, 75.



Fig. 4.18. Bronze statuette with gold foil from Ugarit depicting the enthroned god El. Drill holes appear above the ears giving evidence that the figure originally had horns, a common symbol of divinity in the ancient Near East. Compare the line drawing of the Ugaritic deity El published by C. Schaeffer (*Syria* 43 [1966]: fig. 3). Courtesy Mission to Ras Shamra-Ougarit and Ebla to Damascus Exhibition, Smithsonian Institution. Photo by Ingrid Strüben.

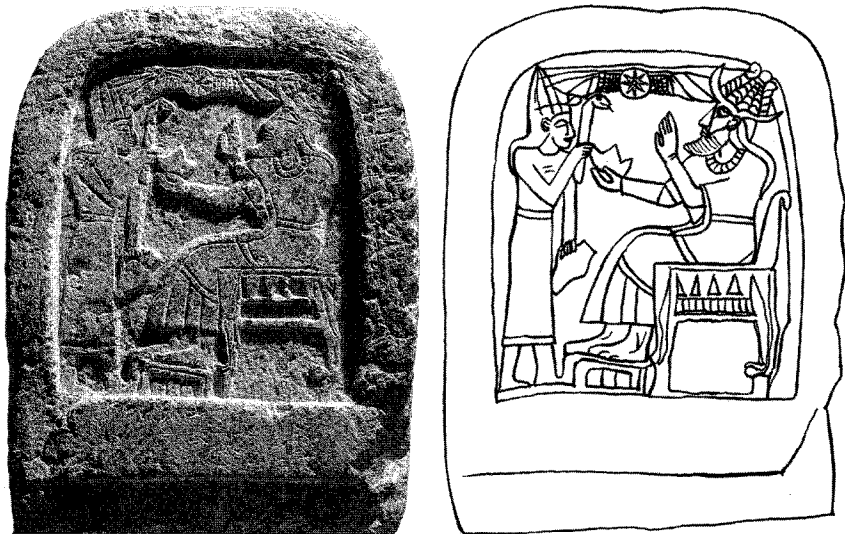


Fig. 4.19. Serpentine stela from Ugarit depicting the god El. Note, by comparing the line drawing to the photograph (especially the creature in the attendant's hand), how interpretation (and the possibility of misrepresentation) is involved in the drawing process. Courtesy Mission to Ras Shamra-Ougarit and Ebla to Damascus Exhibition, Smithsonian Institution. Photo by Ingrid Strüben. Drawing courtesy of T. N. D. Mettinger, *In Search of God*, fig. 8.

Misinterpretations from the Drawing Process

Misinterpretations can also be “read into” iconography in the drawing process. The first lesson one learns as an epigraphist is never to trust anyone else’s script chart. Yet such care (and appropriate skepticism) has not been a part of line drawings and the study of iconography.

For example, compare the bearded statuette from Ugarit (often thought to be El) with Schaeffer’s often used drawing (fig. 4.18). The line drawing (perhaps unduly influenced by the mistaken view that El was a *deus otiose*) adds many wrinkles.⁴⁵ El, no more than we in our vanity, certainly did not appreciate adding in wrinkles he did not have! Or, compare the creature in the attendant’s hand on the serpentine stela from Ugarit with a line drawing (fig. 4.19). Is it really a happy snake?

⁴⁵ Pardee (*Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 224) notes from his study of the ritual texts that “the prestige [of El] is enough ... to discount attempts to make of him a *deus otiose* in Ugaritic religion.” See idem, *Les textes rituels*, 900, 963.

Promises and New Directions

Enough about pitfalls. What promising new directions lie ahead? The impact of the Fribourg school is remarkable, especially with its influential OBO series. The future will continue to produce more valid syntheses than the past. Most importantly, our expectations are higher. No longer will scholars of ancient religion be allowed to get away with a narrow text-centered approach with a few token illustrations of a god here or a goddess there. After full-length iconographic treatments (such as Cornelius's analysis of Baal and Reshef), the bar has been raised.

Comparative Insights from the Ancient Near East

As is evident in the contributions to the present volume, advances in understanding Syro-Palestinian images will directly benefit from the study of cultic images in cognate cultures. As recently as 1964, A. Leo Oppenheim lamented that "the role and the function of the divine image in [Mesopotamian] civilization have never been considered important enough to merit a systematic scholarly investigation⁴⁶ ... they have received a modicum of the attention they deserve."⁴⁷ The same could have been said of ancient Egypt, Anatolia, Syria and Israel in the mid-1960s. But not anymore.

Today, thanks to recent studies of cultic images in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Anatolia, we have a new set of questions to ask of the Syro-Palestinian world. (a) What materials were used to craft a deity? (b) What was the role of the artisan? (c) How was the image actually made? (d) How was it quickened and consecrated for use? (e) Finally, and perhaps most importantly, how was the image used in ritual and theology? In the space remaining I will explore some of the answers that can be found in Syro-Palestinian sources (textual, archaeological and iconographic).

Materials Used

Mesopotamian and Egyptian texts (in the genres of myth⁴⁸ and ritual⁴⁹) reveal the materials (e.g., gold, silver, bronze, copper, precious stones, worked

⁴⁶ Now see I. J. Winter, "'Idols of the King': Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Actions in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 6 (1992): 13–42. Winter offers this treatment of royal images as a "foundation for such an undertaking" (36 n. 1).

⁴⁷ A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 183.

⁴⁸ I am indebted to two forthcoming articles: V. A. Hurowitz, "What Goes In Is What Comes Out—Materials for Creating Cult Statues," forthcoming in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. G. Beckman and T. J. Lewis (Brown Judaic Studies); and A. Ben-Tor, "The Sad Fate of Images and the Statues of Hazor," forthcoming in *Confronting the Past: Archaeological and Historical Essays on Ancient Israel in Honor of William G. Dever*, ed. S. Gitin, J. E. Wright, and J. P. Dessel (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns). See too the following note.

⁴⁹ M. B. Dick and C. Walker, "The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The

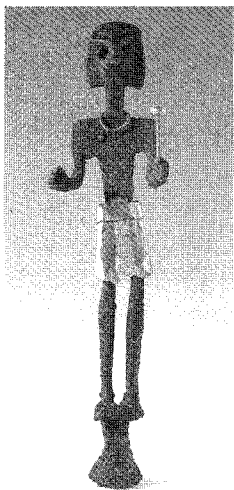


Fig. 4.20. Silver statuette of a male deity wielding a mace found at Ugarit. In contrast to the propensity to use bronze for such figurines, this one was cast in silver. Courtesy Mission to Ras Shamra-Ougarit and the Musée de la civilisation de Québec. Photo by Jacques Lessard.

stone and wood) used to make statues. Archaeology is less helpful owing to the reuse of costly goods in antiquity and their inability to withstand the ravages of time.

A New Kingdom text describes Re: “his bones being silver, his flesh gold, his hair from true lapis lazuli.” Innana’s statue is described in cuneiform literature as made of metal, lapis lazuli and boxwood. Of special note is the Erra Epic’s mention of *mēsu* wood, the preferred material, for it is “the flesh of the gods.”⁵⁰ Images were then dressed with various accessories such as crowns, standards, clothing, insignia and decorative jewelry. Occasionally we have textual references to less costly goods, such as clay, wood and wax.⁵¹

In contrast, we have few textual references of the materials used by artisans in ancient Syria to form a cult statue (although we do read of “Nergal of Stone” at Emar).⁵² Here we must rely on the material culture to stock the inventory of the workman’s shop. As one would suspect, similar materials were used, including gold (fig. 4.3), bronze figures with gold overlay (fig. 4.18), silver (fig. 4.20), finely worked limestone (fig. 4.7), serpentine stone (fig. 4.19), ivory (fig. 4.2) and terracotta (fig. 4.21).

Mesopotamian *mīs pī* Ritual,” in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. B. Dick (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 55–121; C. Walker and M. Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian Mīs Pī Ritual* (State Archives of Assyria Literary Texts 1; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001); A. Berlejung, “Washing the Mouth: The Consecration of Divine Images in Mesopotamia,” in van der Toorn, *The Image and the Book*, 45–72; D. Lorton, “The Theology of Cult Statues in Ancient Egypt,” in Dick, *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth*, 123–210; R. K. Ritner, “Daily Ritual of the Temple of Amun-Re at Karnak,” *COS* 1:55–57.

⁵⁰ See Hurowitz, “What Goes In Is What Comes Out,” and Ben-Tor, “The Sad Fate of Images and the Statues of Hazor.” On the New Kingdom Re text, Ben-Tor quotes from M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 198. The fuller text (known as “The Destruction of Mankind”) reads: “Re, the self-created ... Mankind plotted against him, while his majesty had grown old, his bones being silver, his flesh gold, his hair true lapis lazuli.” Hurowitz (who is in turn dependant on G. Buccellati and P. Gaebelein) notes the description of Inanna as found in her descent into the underworld (lines 43–46). Hurowitz discusses *mēsu* wood at length.

⁵¹ So Hurowitz, “What Goes In Is What Comes Out.” Did the use of such a base material as clay designate a lesser deity (e.g., the clay figurines of the minister god Ninshubur) or even the lack of divinity (cf. protective clay figures such as the “creatures of the Abzu”)?

⁵² D. Arnaud, *Textes syriens de l’Âge du Bronze récent* (Aula Orientalis Supplement 1; Sabadell-Bar-



Fig. 4.21. Terracotta relief from Emar (Meskene) of a goddess on a throne. Courtesy Ebla to Damascus Exhibition, Smithsonian Institution. Photo by Ingrid Strüben.

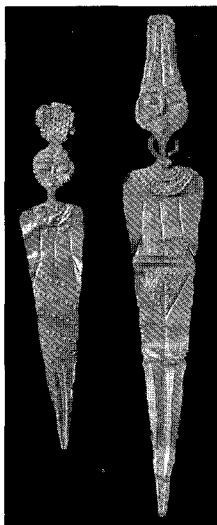


Fig. 4.22. These Middle Bronze Age figurines in gold foil from Gezer depict goddesses of unknown identity. Photo courtesy of Zev Radovan.

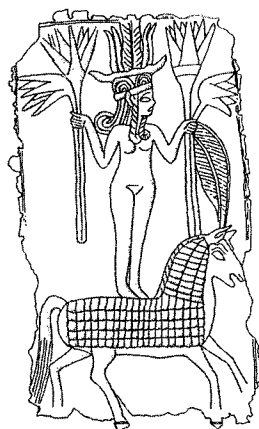


Fig. 4.23. A drawing of a Late Bronze Age gold plaque (from the Lachish Acropolis Temple) depicting a nude goddess on horseback, holding lotus flowers. Courtesy of the Expedition to Lachish, D. Ussishkin, Director. From *NEAEHL*, 3:902, fig. 46.

Similarly, we have artisans working in gold and bronze at places such as Middle Bronze Age Gezer (fig. 4.22), Late Bronze Age Lachish (fig. 4.23), Hazor (fig. 4.24), Megiddo and Shechem/Tell Balâṭah (fig. 4.25); silver at Iron Age Tel Mique (fig. 4.26); stone at Iron Age Arad, Hazor and Dan; terracotta at Taanach (fig. 4.1) and Horvat Qitmit (fig. 4.27); and ivory at Late Bronze Age Megiddo (fig. 4.6).

Whether the pillar figurines (fig. 4.10) designate goddesses or “prayers in clay” to a deity remains unsettled.⁵³ As Meyers has noted, they do not “exhibit some symbols of divine identity in headdress, garb, pose, or attached object.” Thus I think Meyers is correct when she argues that “one should be skeptical about identifying any of these terra-cotta statuettes, or

celona: Editorial AUSA, 1991), 143–44 (text 87). See too H. Avalos, “Legal and Social Institutions in Canaan and Ancient Israel,” *CANE* 1:623. I am indebted to Jack Sasson for these references.

⁵³ Thanks to the work of scholars such as R. Kletter and D. Gilbert-Perez (see above, note 33), we have a much better data set with which to work. See Lewis, “Divine Images and Aniconism in Ancient Israel,” 44–45.

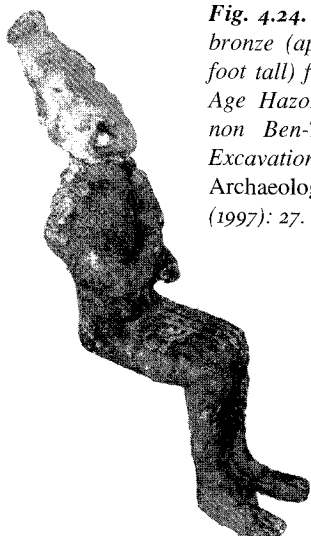


Fig. 4.24. Uncleaned large bronze (approximately one foot tall) from Late Bronze Age Hazor. Courtesy Amnon Ben-Tor and Hazor Excavations. From *Biblical Archaeology Review* 23(1) (1997): 27.



Fig. 4.25. The Tell Balâṭah Bronze. Photo by Lee C. Ellenberger. Courtesy of the Joint Expedition to Tell Balâṭah/Shechem and E. F. Campbell.

related clay plaques, with goddesses at all, let alone with any specific goddess such as Ishtar, Anat, or Asherah.”⁵⁴

Though we have no inventory lists of materials used,⁵⁵ we do have occasional mention in our written sources. In EA 55, Akizzi, the mayor of Qatna, tells his lord (Namhurya; prenomén of Amenhotep IV) that to refashion the statue of Shimigi (= Hurrian sun god), the god of his father (which was taken away by the king of Hatti), he will need “a sack of gold, just as much as is needed.” Tushratta’s lust for solid gold images (in contrast to wooden images with gold overlay) is well documented (EA 27:33; 26:41).

Biblical tradition mentions Aaron’s golden bull (Exod 32:4; deity or pedestal?), Moses’s bronze serpent,⁵⁶ the silver image of Micah’s mom (Judg 17:1–5), the iron image of Deutero-Isaiah’s foes (Isa 44:12), stone *maššēbôt* of Baal (2 Kgs 3:2; 10:26–27),⁵⁷ not to mention wooden images (Isa 40:20; 44:13–17) and wooden *’āšērîm* (e.g., Judg 6:26). Finally, Ezekiel

⁵⁴ C. Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford, 1988), 162.

⁵⁵ A type of inventory list is found in Exod 35:5–9. RSV’s translation reads: “gold, silver, and bronze; blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen; goats’ hair, tanned rams’ skins, and goatskins; acacia wood, oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, and onyx stones and stones for setting.” Yet this list has to do with the ephod and breastpiece, not a divine image *per se*.

⁵⁶ People are described as burning incense to it in 2 Kgs 18:4. For additional resources on the use of snakes in religious rituals, see below, note 107.

⁵⁷ There is no mention of divine images of stone or rock such as those we have from Anatolia. In Israel, “God is a Rock” but only in a metaphorical sense. Deutero-Isaiah asserts this (Isa 44:8) just before his mockery of idols made from iron and wood.



Fig. 4.26. Silver medallion from Tel Migne-Ekron showing a figure with upraised arms praying to the goddess Ishtar who is standing on a lion. Courtesy Tel Migne-Ekron Excavations. From P. King and L. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), fig. 219.



Fig. 4.27. A triple-horned terracotta Edomite deity from the excavations at Horvat Qitmit in the Negev. P. Beck concluded that this figure is that of a goddess rather than a god. Courtesy Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University. From *Biblical Archaeology Review* 22(6) (1996): 28–30.

notes the fine jewelry used for divine images (Ezek 7:20; 16:17). The so-called image-ban texts are replete with mentions of gold, silver and wood (Jer 10:3–4; Isa 40:19–20; 41:7; 46:6; Hos 8:4; 13:2; Hab 2:19; Ps 115:4; 135:15; Exod 20:23). (As for choice of materials, the most surprising reference is Jer 44:19, which implies the making of cakes bearing the image of the Queen of Heaven.)

As noted by Hurowitz, “the narrators indicate that illegitimate cult images are made of tainted materials.”⁵⁸ Curiously, especially in light of the pillar figurines, the Bible makes no polemic against the making and worshipping of clay images.⁵⁹ Was clay used for subordinate beings (such as humans [Gen 2:7; Jer 18: 6])?

⁵⁸ See Hurowitz, “What Goes In Is What Comes Out,” and M. B. Dick, “Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image,” in his *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth*, 41–43.

⁵⁹ Clay images are mentioned in the Apocrypha (Bel and the Dragon, vs. 7; Wisdom of Solomon 15:6–17). I am indebted to Hurowitz for these references.

Artisans' Role

Our fullest description of the role of artisans in crafting a divine image comes from Mesopotamia, especially the *mīs pî* rituals recently published by Walker and Dick.⁶⁰ This was an elaborate affair involving extensive divination to locate a time for the task, to select the many different artisans, and to determine the place of refurbishing (the *bīt mummi*). Various craftsmen are listed in detail as are the costly materials (e.g., red gold, precious stones) used to make the statue, together with its crown and decorative jewelry, so that the gods could be ceremoniously “born.”⁶¹ The cult image was the joint product of human and divine artisans.⁶² Human artisans were acting on behalf of the gods in fashioning the statues and any skill displayed was ultimately that of specific craft deities. It is clear that the statues could not “become divine” through mere human activity. The “opening of the mouth” was a magical act enabling the statue to act as a vessel for the deity. Thus we end up with human artisans even disavowing that they have crafted the deity, for, in Esarhaddon’s words, “the making of (images of) the gods and goddesses is your (i.e., Ashur’s and Marduk’s) right, it is in your hands.”⁶³

In contrast, the Levant gives only hints of the artisans, their role and technique. We do have documented (at least for Ugarit) mention of specialized craftsmen including metal workers (*nsk*), gold- and silversmiths (*nsk ksp*), coppermiths (*nsk tl̄t*), sculptors and carvers (*psl*, *zadimmu*), engravers and polishers (*mly*), borers (*shl*) and specialists in lapis lazuli (*qn ’uym*).⁶⁴

The actual crafting of the divine image goes unmentioned. As noted above, Akizzi, the mayor of Qatna, reminds Amenhotep IV that he “knows what the fashioning of divine statues is like.” Perhaps it was such common knowledge that it went without saying. Yet when Akizzi says that he will

⁶⁰ Walker and Dick, “The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia.” See above, note 49.

⁶¹ See Dick and Walker (“The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 66, 116–17) for discussion of the debate between R. Borger and B. Landsberger regarding the translation of (*w*)*alādu*.

⁶² Dick and Walker, “The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia.” See also Ashur 418 (= E. Ebeling, *Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1931], §27, 108–14) which differs from other “mouth washing” texts in that it uses diagrams to illustrate the actual placement of the cultic apparatus (e.g., reed mats, *paṭiru*-altars, bricks, and curtains).

⁶³ Dick and Walker, “The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 65.

⁶⁴ Cf. J. Sanmartín, “Das Handwerk in Ugarit: Eine lexikalische Studie,” *Studi epigrafici e linguistici* 12 (1995): 169–90; J.-P. Vita, “The Society of Ugarit,” in *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, ed. W. G. E. Watson and N. Wyatt (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 486–90.

need “a sack of gold, just as much as is needed” to refashion the statue of his father’s god, one wonders how honest he was with any leftovers.

The Aqhat story at Ugarit implies that in certain circumstances one need not go to a specialist. It describes a son setting up a stela for his divine ancestor. Yet we have no image-making texts preserved from ancient Syria comparable to the *mīs pī* texts from Mesopotamia. Here we must look to the material culture, which speaks loudly of the craft of metalworkers and stonecutters. Perhaps these artisans gave credit for their ability to Kothar-wa-Hasis (as did Mesopotamian artisans to their craft deities, Ea, Ninlilu, Kusibanda, Ninkurra, and Ninzadim).⁶⁵

Ironically, in biblical tradition, it is the polemical image-ban texts that give our best insight into the various artisans. We read of metalworkers (goldsmiths and silversmiths) and carpenters. Despite the polemical tone, we still read of their technique and skill. Deutero-Isaiah mentions ironsmiths working over coals and carpenters working with hammers, lines, pencils, compasses and planes. Others speak of the technique of gold and silver overlay (Isa 40:19; Jer 10:3–4; Hab 2:19). Hosea speaks of “idols skillfully made of silver” (13:2; cf. the “*skilled* craftsman” in Isa 40:20). Nonetheless, emphasis is placed not on the skills of the human artisans, but on how human hands taint the final product (e.g., Ps 115:4).

In contrast to these unnamed artisans, Moses, Aaron and Gideon are named as craftsmen (Moses and the bronze serpent; Aaron and the golden bull; Gideon and the ephod⁶⁶), yet one wonders to what degree they relied on the expertise of fellow craftsman. With Micah’s mother we can see that she was the patron who employed the silversmith (Judg 17:4).

Of special note is the association of royalty with divine images. Evans, following Ahlström, has astutely pointed out how “kings set up or removed cult images whenever they engaged in cultic organization or reorganization.” He is certainly correct that “religious iconography was ... an important aspect of the national cult which the king administered.”⁶⁷ Yet our texts are often silent. In 1 Kgs 11:5–8 Solomon makes shrines for Chemosh, Molech, Ashtoreth and Milcom. One could posit that he had divine images crafted for each, yet the text is silent. Elsewhere it is more forthcoming. First Kings 12:28 tells the famous story of Jeroboam making two bulls of gold—seem-

⁶⁵ Dick and Walker, “The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 62. Cf. *KTU* 1.43.8, which mentions Kothar in one of the Ugaritic “entry” texts (see below).

⁶⁶ Num 21:8–9; Exod 32:1–4, 8, 20, 23–24; Judg 8:24–27. In the Numbers passage, Moses is actually commanded by the deity to fashion the bronze serpent.

⁶⁷ Evans, “Cult Images, Royal Policies and the Origins of Aniconism,” 192.

ingly El images—in his attempt to out-archaize David. Several kings (Ahab in 1 Kgs 16:33; Manasseh in 2 Kgs 21:3, 7; cf. 2 Chr 33:3, 7) and one queen (Maacah in 1 Kgs 15:13) made *ʾāšērāh* images. Ahab made a *maššēbāh* of Baal that seems to be referring to a divine image (2 Kgs 3:2).

Finally, in late apocalyptic literature we have the account of King Nebuchadrezzar making a colossal golden image (*šēlēm dī dēhab*) for cultic purposes (Dan 3:1).⁶⁸ This golden image contrasts with Nebuchadrezzar's "large image" (*šaggīʾ*) in Dan 2:31–32 which, though exhibiting an awesome brightness (*zīwēh yattīr*; similar to *melammu?*), had literal "feet of clay." That the image of chapter three is that of a deity seems almost certain (cf. 3:12, 14, 18, "they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up").⁶⁹ Similarly, compare Nabonidus's erection of a statue for the moon god Sin.⁷⁰

Rituals of Quickening, Consecration (and Purification?)

Texts trump archaeology when it comes to articulating ritual. Elaborate rituals of the quickening and the consecration of cult statues, of their "(re)vivification" and "mouth opening," are well attested in Mesopotamia and Egypt. In Anatolia we even read of a newly-constructed golden cult image being smeared with blood in a purification rite.⁷¹

In the Hebrew Bible there are no texts mentioning a quickening ritual of a divine image⁷² and, as far as I know, only three brief mentions of any

⁶⁸ Its huge size (60 cubits [ca. 90 feet] high, 6 cubits [ca. 9 feet] wide) reminds one of monumental architecture in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and the meter-long footprints at Ayn Dara in Syria. Known from texts only, we have Baal's large throne (*KTU* 1.6.1.56–65) and Yahweh's cherub throne (10 cubits by 10 cubits). Later parallels more fitting to the date of the book of Daniel are also known. See J. J. Collins, *Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 162, 180. On the size of Yahweh's throne in the Solomonic temple and ancient Near Eastern parallels, see E. Bloch-Smith, "'Who is the King of Glory?' Solomon's Temple and Its Symbolism," in *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King*, ed. M. D. Coogan, J. C. Exum, and L. E. Stager (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 25. As Bloch-Smith notes, "a god of cosmic size is omnipotent, omnipresent, and reigns for eternity."

⁶⁹ In contrast, note that the large statue in Dan 2:31–36 represents the course of history rather than a deity.

⁷⁰ Cf. the so-called "Verse Account of Nabonidus" (trans. A. L. Oppenheim, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. J. B. Pritchard, 3rd ed. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969], 313), as noted by Collins (*Daniel*, 180–81).

⁷¹ I owe this reference to an article by G. Beckman, "Blood in Hittite Ritual," forthcoming in *Gedenkschrift für Erich Neu*. The installation of a newly-constructed divine image is described as follows: "they smear the golden divine image, the wall (of the temple), and all of the implements of the new (deity) with blood so that the [new] deity and the temple will be pure" (*KUB* 29.4 IV 38–40 [*CTH* 481]).

⁷² Yet compare the description of God vivifying the human clay in Gen 2:7!

consecration ritual. In Judg 17:3, Micah's mother "wholly consecrated" (*haqdēš hiqdaštī*) silver "to Yahweh" prior to giving it to the silversmith. In Dan 3:1–7, we read of the royal making of the golden image and its erection (3:1). An elaborate dedication ritual follows (*ḥānukkat šalmā* ') attended by royal, judicial, administrative officials (3:2–3). We then hear of proclamations and commands to worship the image along with a large variety of musical accompaniment (3:4–7).⁷³

We may have a third example in the Bethel narratives where Jacob pours oil on a *maššēbāh* (*wayyišōq šemen*, Gen 28:18; cf. 35:14) that "shall be God's house" (*bēt ʾēlōhīm*, 28:22). Does this imply a ritual whereby the deity takes up residence in stone, or is the *maššēbāh* a marker of sacred space?⁷⁴ In either case, it is apparent that while the anointing with oils and pouring of libations denote sacral effectiveness, they fall far short of the elaborate "(re)vivification" and "mouth opening" rituals accorded Mesopotamian and Egyptian cult statues.

Once Made / Consecrated / Purified

In the ancient Near East (especially in Mesopotamia⁷⁵), once images are fashioned, vivified and consecrated they become the focus of attention. Our extant evidence for the Levantine world preserves nothing so elaborate, yet our data are ever increasing. Common sense tells us that those who fashioned divine statues then erected them in their temples and sanctuaries, yet we have no explicit ritual in our extant texts. It has been commonly asserted that "Azatiwada placed the statue of the god *Krnrtyš* in the midst of his city,"⁷⁶ yet K. L. Younger has convincingly shown that this is not supported by the Hieroglyphic Luwian of this bilingual text.⁷⁷

⁷³ All of this bears little resemblance to the Mesopotamian *mīs pī* ritual. Scholars often cite how this "ceremony of dedication of the image ... can be illustrated from Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions" (so N. Porteous, *Daniel* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965], 57). At best, this may be a type of cultural memory of Mesopotamian dedication ceremonies. Cf. "mnemohistory" as articulated by scholars such as J. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) and M. Smith, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory, and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

⁷⁴ Elsewhere this pillar is described as receiving anointing (Gen 31:13) and libations (Gen 35:14). Yet it is clear that the *maššēbāh* in these narratives is commemorative in nature. In anthropological terms, it marks sacred space where an adherent witnesses a theophany. The *maššēbāh* marks "the place where he spoke with him" (Gen 35:14). The place in question is Bethel (35:7, 15) where sacred vows were made (31:13). "Bethel" is a complicated word in that it later becomes a hypostasis for deity.

⁷⁵ See Walker and Dick, "The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia;" Dick, *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth*.

⁷⁶ Y. Avishur, *Phoenician Inscriptions and the Bible* (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publication, 2000), 193.

⁷⁷ K. L. Younger, Jr., "The Phoenician Inscription of Azatiwada: An Integrated Reading," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 43/1 (1998): 19, 36–40; idem, "The Azatiwada Inscription," *COS* 2:150.

Two economic texts from Ugarit (*KTU* 4.168, 4.182) mention clothes for divine statues.⁷⁸ The large number of garments mentioned in the ritual texts is also telling. Pardee concludes, “the fact that so many textile products were presented to the deities in the Ugaritic cult would seem to indicate either that the cult statues were clothed and that these garments were changed fairly often or that the clothing of their priestly representatives was provided by this divine fiction.”⁷⁹ Note especially the mention of garments (and possible clothing ritual?) in one of the so-called “entry” rituals (*KTU* 1.43.4, 22; see the next section below).⁸⁰

Even the biblical tradition preserves the dressing of an image. We read that “women wove hangings for the asherah” (2 Kgs 23:7) and that the divine image of the Ammonite god Milcom wore a crown (with a precious stone).⁸¹ We also have allusions to clothes associated with Yahweh. H. Niehr writes:

Some passages in the Old Testament say that YHWH is clothed. Isa 6:1 mentions the fringes of YHWH’s garments; Ezek 16:8 the clothing of YHWH; Dan 7:9 the garment of the Olden One; and Isa 63:1–3 the blood-stained garments of YHWH. Ps 60:10 and 108:10 list YHWH’s sandals. Allusions to jewels adorning YHWH’s *cult statue* and his throne are made in Exod 24:10 and Ezek 1:22, 26.⁸²

Yet, in contrast to Niehr’s assertion, there is no explicit mention of a cult statue of Yahweh (on which, see caveat below) or an explicit clothing ritual. Niehr adds that “clouds, justice, strength and light as YHWH’s clothes” are used as metaphorical expressions. Such could also be the case with the above passages if there was indeed no image of Yahweh used in the Jerusalem Temple.

⁷⁸ See C. Virolleaud, *Le Palais royal d’Ugarit, publié sous la direction de Claude F.-A. Schaeffer* (Mission de Ras Shamra VII; Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1957), xxxi–xxxii, 137–42 (texts #106 [RS 15.115], #107 [RS 15.82]).

⁷⁹ Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 226 (see too 109 n. 98).

⁸⁰ Whether this garment was intended to clothe the image is not stated. Line 22 is broken. Cf. G. del Olmo Lete (*Canaanite Religion: According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit*, trans. W. G. E. Watson [Bethesda: CDL Press, 1999] 260, 286 n. 96, 308–9) who thinks that such passages do refer to the “ritual attire of the gods.”

⁸¹ 2 Sam 12:30. See P. K. McCarter, Jr. (*II Samuel* [Garden City: Doubleday, 1984], 311–13) for the textual criticism on this passage. Cf. the mention of the ephod in connection with Micah’s image in Judg 17–18. Cf. F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman’s (*Hosea* [Garden City: Doubleday, 1980] 242) comments on Hos 2:10 that find a close parallel in Ezekiel 16. It is plausible that the author of Ezekiel 16 used the imagery of dressing a cult image in his description of Yahweh dressing Jerusalem.

⁸² H. Niehr, “In Search of YHWH’s Cult Statue in the First Temple,” in van der Toorn, *The Image and the Book*, 89 (emphasis mine).

Reverence for images is evident in Hosea's mention that "men kiss bull image(s)" (13:2; cf. 1 Kgs 19:18). When Ahaz sacrifices to "the gods of Damascus who had defeated him" (2 Chr 28:23) one could posit that he did so in front of their cult images (although the text is silent). When the Judean king Amaziah brings divine images from Edom, he "installs them as his gods, bows down to them, and offers incense to them" (2 Chr 25:14–16). The "Queen of Heaven" text in Jeremiah 44 mentions cakes made in the goddess's image in conjunction with burning incense and pouring libations (Jer 44:17–19).

Rituals of Procession and Travel

The ritual procession and traveling of divine images is well documented in the texts and iconography of the ancient Near East (fig. 4.28). The reason for their travel varies from pilgrimage to installation to ritual banquets to marriage rites⁸⁴ to ritual warfare. In *Enūma Eliš* we read that when the gods travel their cult images stay at the hotel Babylon (a terrestrial counterpart created by Marduk to parallel Esharra, the abode of the gods in heaven).⁸⁵ Kuntillet Ajrud comes to mind as well as a way station for travelers (and their gods?).

As noted by de Tarragon, Xella, del Olmo Lete, Pardee and others, several ritual texts from Ugarit seem to indicate ritual processions of divine images.⁸⁶ *KTU* 1.43 mentions when (the cult statues of) Athtartu and the Gatharuma "enter" the royal palace followed by offerings and a banquet.⁸⁷

⁸³ Andersen and Freedman (*Hosea*, 631–32) argue that the (majestic) plural "calves" refers to the singular image of Baal as a young bull.

⁸⁴ It is often said that "Tushratta of Mitanni twice sent the statue of Ishtar of Nineveh to Egypt to help heal the pharaoh" (so P. Bienkowski, "Mitanni," in *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000], 200). See too G. Wilhelm ("The Kingdom of Mitanni in the Second-Millennium Upper Mesopotamia," *CANE* 2:1251) who writes: "On ... hearing of an illness of the pharaoh [Amenhotep], Tushratta sent him the statue of the famous goddess Shawushka of Nineveh, as his father Shuttarna had already done before him." In contrast, W. L. Moran (*The Amarna Letters* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992], 61–62) argues that the statue was not sent to heal the aging king. "This explanation rests purely on analogy and finds no support in this letter More likely, it seems, is a connection with the solemnities associated with the marriage of Tushratta's daughter." The text (EA 23:13–17) says simply: "Thus Shaushka, of Nineveh, mistress of all lands: 'I wish to go to Egypt, a country that I love, and then return.' Now I (Tushratta) herewith send her and she is on her way."

⁸⁵ B. R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*, vol. 1 (Bethesda: CDL Press, 1993), 382, 385.

⁸⁶ Note how del Olmo Lete (*Canaanite Religion*, 283 n. 86) says that "we have no idea precisely why they [the statues of the gods] were carried around in Ugarit."

⁸⁷ Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 214–64; idem, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 69–72; del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 285–91.

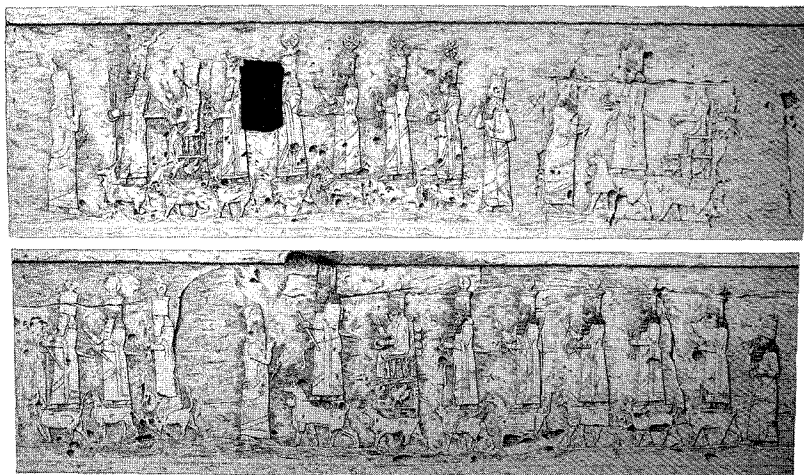


Fig. 4.28. A procession of deities mounted on various animals coming before an Assyrian king. From Maltaya, located approximately 70 km north of Mosul. From V. Place, *Ninive et l'Assyrie*, vol. 3 (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1867), pl. 45. *Special Collections, The Sheridan Libraries of The Johns Hopkins University*.

The king has a prominent role in the procession, welcoming the gods and walking on foot seven times after their statues.⁸⁸ *KTU* 1.91 mentions when Athtartu of the steppe and (two?) Rashap (statues) enter the royal palace⁸⁹ in conjunction with royal sacrifices. In *KTU* 1.148.18–22, after Athtartu of the steppe enters the royal palace, numerous offerings are presented.⁹⁰ *KTU* 1.112.6–8 mentions the king's sons and daughters going up seven times to the “*hmn* sanctuary,” followed by the divine statues doing likewise.⁹¹

In EA 164 Aziru has his divine images travel with his messenger in order to properly secure an oath.⁹² In biblical tradition the Philistines send messengers throughout the land “to carry the good news (of Saul's defeat) to their images” (1 Sam 31:9).

⁸⁸ P. Merlo and P. Xella (“The Ugaritic Cultic Texts,” in *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, ed. W. G. E. Watson and N. Wyatt [Leiden: Brill, 1999], 294–95) note how this ritual “which is focussed completely on the procession of divine statues” has “the role carried out by the king and his family ... completely in the foreground.”

⁸⁹ Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 489–519; idem, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 214–16; del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 257; Merlo and Xella, “The Ugaritic Cultic Texts,” 295.

⁹⁰ Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 779–806; idem, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 44–49; del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 132.

⁹¹ Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 630–42; idem, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 36–38; del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 140, 245.

⁹² Aziru, son of Abdi-Ashirta, to Tutu [Egyptian official]: “Here are my gods and my messenger ... thus you are to be put under oath to my gods”

Biblical writers also know that gods travel (*ʿēlōhîm ʾāšer yēlēkū lēpānēnû*, Exod 32:1) and occasionally speak of the processions of deities. That Rachel hid the *tērāpîm* images (also referred to as *ʿēlōhîm*) in the saddle-bag of her camel (Gen 31:34) implies their portability (as does the small size of many figurines). Other divine images (such as Jeroboam's bulls) are sites of pilgrimage where humans do the traveling.

Pilgrimage passages are presented positively and negatively based on Yahwistic criteria. Amos takes the positive notion of a solemn ritual procession of divine images and reverses it by noting that people will have to carry the images they made into exile (Amos 5:26). The procession of Babylonian deities is referred to in Isa 46:1–7 in a pejorative context.⁹³

Bel is bowed, Nebo is cowering,
 Their images are a burden for beasts and cattle;
 The things you would carry [in procession]
 Are now piled as a burden
 On tired [beasts]. (Isa 46:1; JPS)

Similarly, the polemic in Jer 10:5 mocks how (illegitimate) images “have to be carried for they cannot walk.”

The processions that the biblical editors favored were those of “the Ark of Yahweh’s covenant.”⁹⁴ As noted by F. Cross, “the portable Ark with its cherubim became the ‘centerpiece’ usurping the place of the divine image of Canaanite temples.”⁹⁵ The oldest Ark tradition seems to be preserved in the ritual warfare of Num 10:35. The so-called Song of the Ark reads:

Whenever the Ark set out:
 “Advance, O Yahweh,
 May your enemies be scattered,
 May your foes flee before you;

When the Ark rested:
 “Return, O Yahweh
 with the myriads of Israel’s militias.”⁹⁶

⁹³ See W. W. Hallo (“Cult Statue and Divine Image: A Preliminary Study,” in *Scripture in Context 2: More Essays on the Comparative Method*, ed. W. W. Hallo, J. C. Moyer, and L. G. Perdue [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983], 14–15) who notes that Deutero-Isaiah has Nabonidus in mind.

⁹⁴ B. A. Levine (*Numbers 1–20* [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 316) is correct that presumably earlier references to the Ark did not refer to it in terms of its contents (i.e., the “tablets of the covenant”) and that such a description is characteristic of Deuteronomy (Deut 10:8; 31:9, 25–26).

⁹⁵ F. M. Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 91.

⁹⁶ On this verse see F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the*

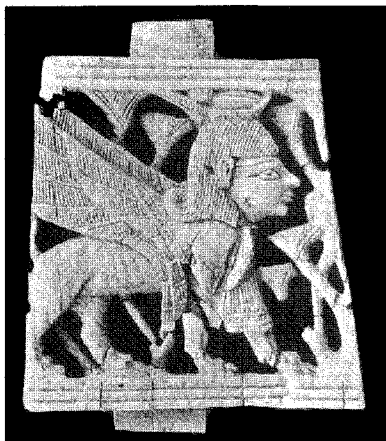


Fig. 4.29. Among the ivories found at Sebastiyeh (biblical Samaria) is this winged cherub dating to the Iron Age II. Courtesy Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

It is clear that the Ark stands for Yahweh (either as a pedestal for the deity or a representational emblem of the deity). It is addressed as such. No polemic was written against it. This metonymic representation was viewed as legitimate.⁹⁷ With similar language Ps 132:8 (cf. 2 Chr 6:41) proclaims:

Advance O Yahweh to/from⁹⁸
your resting place,
You and your powerful Ark.

It is evident that the Ark is not identical with Yahweh. It is a metonymic representation symbolizing his presence in procession. The procession in Ps 24:7–10 contains the call: “Lift up your heads O gates and doors (of the temple) that Yahweh of hosts (the King

of Glory) may come in.” This too seems to have the Ark in mind and its ability to represent Yahweh. Finally, note how the “Ark of God” represents Yahweh in its travels in the Ark narrative in 1 Samuel. Note especially how the author portrays the Philistines proclaiming the Ark (with “Yahweh of Hosts enthroned on the *kērûbîm*” [1 Sam 4:4]) to be a “god” in 1 Sam 4:7.

Some biblical poets adopted a different vision of Yahweh’s travel. If Yahweh indeed was the rider of the clouds like Ugaritic Baal (cf. Ps 68:5), then perhaps he could mount his winged cherub and fly.

(Yahweh) bent the heavens and came down,
A storm cloud under his feet.
He rode a cherub and flew,
He soared on the wings of the wind.
(Ps 18:10–11//2 Sam 22:10–11)

Religion of Israel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 100–101, and Levine, *Numbers* 1–20, 312, 318.

⁹⁷ See Evans, “Cult Images, Royal Policies and the Origins of Aniconism”; Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry*.

⁹⁸ For the translation “from” based on the Ugaritic, D. Hillers, “Ritual Procession of the Ark and Psalm 132,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30 (1968): 48–55, followed by Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 95.

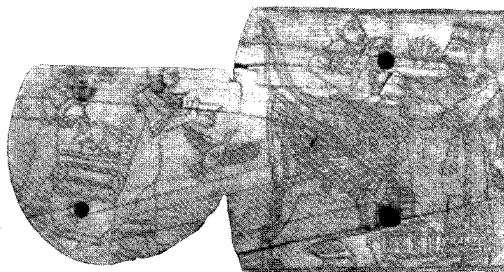


Fig. 4.30. A carved ivory panel from Megiddo (thirteenth–twelfth centuries B.C.E.) showing a sphinx throne. Courtesy Israel Museum, Jerusalem.



Fig. 4.31. The common motif of the winged sun disk appears here on a lmlk storage jar from Lachish. Courtesy of the Expedition to Lachish, D. Ussishkin, Director. From *King and Stager, Life in Biblical Israel*, fig. 182.

According to biblical tradition, in the Jerusalem Temple, the *kērûbîm* formed Yahweh's throne (with Yahweh invisibly seated) with the Ark functioning as the footstool (1 Kgs 6:23–28; 1 Chr 28:2; Ps 132:7). Winged sphinxes appear in the archaeological record (figs. 4.29–30; although often in ivory, rather than the gold overlay mentioned in 1 Kgs 6:28), including the stamp seals documented by B. Sass.⁹⁹ None shows Yahweh as an enthroned rider. Finally, one should point out the winged sun disks that occur on Hebrew seals (fig. 4.31) and their possible connection to Yahweh as a solar deity.¹⁰⁰

Use in Magic Rituals (e.g., Nurturing, Healing, Protection)

From texts we know that gods and demons were thought to heal illnesses or inflict diseases. Similarly, cultic images were used for each of these purposes.¹⁰¹ Occasionally the lines between apotropaic images and divinity

⁹⁹ T. Mettinger, "YHWH SABAOTH—The Heavenly King on the Cherubim Throne," in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays*, ed. T. Ishida (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1982), 109–38; idem, *In Search of God*, 128–29; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 158–60, 168; Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries*, 113 n. 29, 146–47 fig. 48; 162 fig. 60; B. Sass, "The Pre-exilic Hebrew Seals: Iconism vs. Aniconism," in *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals*, ed. B. Sass and C. Uehlinger (OBO 125; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1993), 226–27; fig. 123.

¹⁰⁰ Uehlinger, "Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals, Iconography and Syro-Palestinian Religions," 280, fig. 18; Sass, "The Pre-exilic Hebrew Seals: Iconism vs. Aniconism," 238–39. Sass notes that "with the notable exception of the *lmlk* stamps, the winged sun is rare on Hebrew seals, and very common elsewhere." On the *lmlk* seals, see A. Vaughn, *Theology, History, and Archaeology in the Chronicler's Account of Hezekiah* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999).

¹⁰¹ Some scholars think that the cultic images known as *teraphim* were healing in nature. Yet not one of the fifteen occurrences of the word in the Hebrew Bible notes this function. See T. J. Lewis, "Teraphim," *DDD* 848.

become blurred. For example, the dozens of Bes amulets reflect a “personal piety” not often found in textual pantheons.¹⁰²

At Ugarit we read of gods and royalty being suckled by Athiratu (and Athtartu?).¹⁰³ Such nurturing is reflected in iconography as well, as depicted in figure 4.32.¹⁰⁴ Elsewhere we read of a healing goddess named Shatiquatu, who is fashioned by El acting as a craftsman:

El fills his hands [with clay],
With the very best clay fills his [right hand].
He pinches off some clay. (*KTU* 1.16.5.25–30)

Such language is very suggestive of a clay figurine.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps potters at Ugarit (imitating El) crafted figurines of the goddess Shatiquatu to be used in healing rituals.

Similarly, at Ugarit we read of snake incantations mentioning gifts of snakes (*KTU* 1.100.73–76).¹⁰⁶ Were these apotropaic figurines such as those mentioned in Mesopotamian *namburbi* rituals or those attested in the archaeological record?¹⁰⁷

H. Avalos has documented the many metallic snakes found at various archaeological sites in Israel and its environs, such as the one from Timna (fig. 4.33).¹⁰⁸ As for biblical texts, one need look no further than the Nehushtan crafted by Moses as a therapeutic ritual to cure snake bites (Num 21:8). That such an image was a threat to the Hezekian reform (2 Kgs 18:4)

¹⁰² Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 219–22. See note 19 above.

¹⁰³ In *KTU* 1.23.23–24, 59, 61, the gracious gods “suck the teats of Athiratu’s breasts.” In *KTU* 1.15.2.26–28 Athtartu (=Astarte) [and Anat?] seem to serve as wet-nurses to Yassib, King Kirta’s son. Athtartu is a new reading argued by E. Greenstein (“Kirta,” in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, ed. S. B. Parker [WAW 9; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999], 25, 45 n. 66). Previously it has been read as Athiratu. For Anat’s putative role as wet-nurse, see Walls, *The Goddess Anat in Ugaritic Myth*, 152–54.

¹⁰⁴ Whether the winged goddess depicted here is Anat cannot be determined with certainty. See W. A. Ward, “La déesse nourricière d’Ugarit,” *Syria* 46 (1969): 225–39 and Walls, *The Goddess Anat in Ugaritic Myth*, 153–54.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 313 n. 68.

¹⁰⁶ Perhaps a marriage gift. See del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 369; S. B. Parker, “The Mare and Horon,” in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, ed. S. B. Parker (WAW 9; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 223 n. 10.

¹⁰⁷ In addition to figurines, B. A. Levine and J. –M. de Tarragon note the serpents on the Ain Samia goblet. See “‘Shapshu Cries Out in Heaven’: Dealing with Snake-Bites at Ugarit (*KTU* 1.100, 1.107),” *Revue Biblique* 95 (1988): 481–518. See H. Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 54; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 342 n. 161 for bibliography. For snake figurines and the *namburbi* rituals, see Avalos, 342–43.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 339–41.

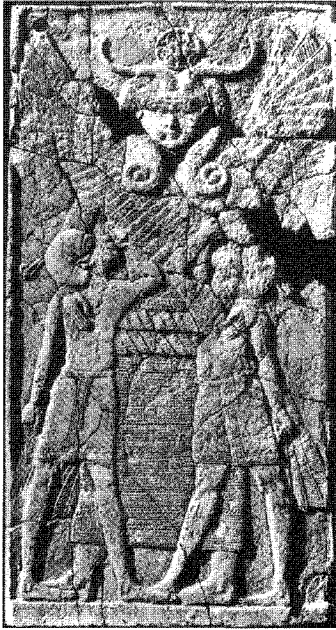


Fig. 4.32. An ivory panel from Late Bronze Age Ugarit showing a winged goddess with bull's horns and a Hathor-style headdress surmounted by a disk. She is suckling two (royal?) individuals. Courtesy Mission to Ras Shamra-Ugarit.

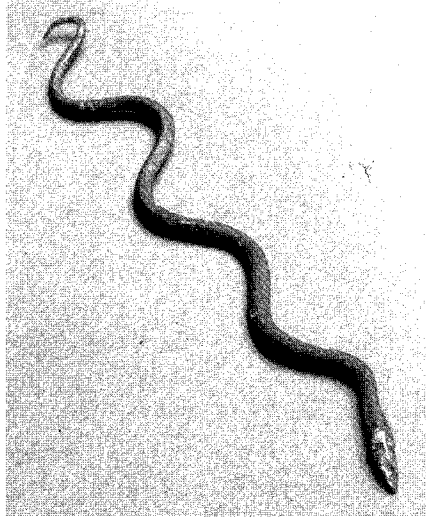


Fig. 4.33. A copper serpent approximately five inches long was found at Timna, 18.5 miles north of the Gulf of Eilat. This site was known for its copper mining activities, especially those of the Egyptian New Kingdom in the Late Bronze Age. The gilded serpent comes from a reused shrine often attributed to the Midianites after the Egyptians had abandoned the site. Photo courtesy of Zev Radovan.

shows that apotropaic figurines could be viewed by some as objects of worship.¹⁰⁹ The suggestion that the Nehushtan was a divine image of the goddess Asherah is speculative.¹¹⁰

Three other biblical examples may denote cultic/divine images being viewed magically. In 1 Samuel 5, the Ark is portrayed as inflicting humans (Philistines) and deities (Dagon) alike with evil. In turn, those afflicted make even more cultic images (five golden mice and five golden tumors in 1 Sam 6:4–15) to ward off the ill effects. In Jer 44:15–19, the Queen of Heaven brings prosperity (e.g., plenty of food) when proper cult (incense,

¹⁰⁹ See Avalos (*Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East*, 337–49) on this passage and the temple as a therapeutic locus. Avalos (347) notes that the Nehushtan “was regarded as a deity itself.”

¹¹⁰ S. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 71.

libations) is presented (presumably to her statue), and tragedy (sword and famine) when left unattended. In Mal 3:20 (Eng. 4:2), the “sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings” (cf. the winged sun disks on the seals mentioned above).

In short, the fact that Jer 10:5 urges

Be not afraid of [illegitimate images],
for they cannot do evil
neither is it in them to do good.

suggests that some people thought they could do both.

Images Taken in Battle: The Exile of Statues

Capturing divine images in battle and exiling them is well attested in text and archaeology. For one of many examples, consider an inscription from Sargon II's palace in Dur-Sharruken (= modern Khorsabad) that notes that after he besieged and conquered the cities of Ashdod, Gimtu (= Gath) and Ashdod-Yam, he declared the divine images as booty.¹¹¹ For iconography, consider the famous depiction from Nimrud of Tiglath-Pileser III's soldiers carrying away the statues of the gods of the conquered city (fig. 3.1).

The Levant has preserved no such reliefs and very few texts. Nonetheless, the texts we do have show that the practice was well known. In EA 134 we read, “From time im[memorial] the g[ods] have not gone aw[ay] from Gubla. [N]ow Aziru has sent troops t[o sei]ze it (Gubla) so that we must give up our gods a[nd they have gone for]th.” In EA 252 we read Lab'ayu speaking: “the city, along with my god, was seized ... I will guard the men that seized the city (and) my god. They are the despoilers of my father, but I will guard them.” Moran notes that “by taking the statue or image of the family god, Lab'ayu's enemies had violated his family.”¹¹²

In Judg 18:24, the Danites steal Micah's cult images, prompting him to lament “you have taken away my gods.” Jeremiah 48:7 notes how the Moabite deity Chemosh (i.e., his statue) will go forth into exile. In the only explicit occurrence of its kind in the Bible, we read of the Judean king Amaziah, after defeating the Edomites, transporting their divine images back to Judah: “He installed them as his gods, bowed down to them, and offered incense to them” (2 Chr 25:14–16).¹¹³

¹¹¹ See K. L. Younger, “Sargon II The Annals (2.118A),” *COS* 2:294; see further, M. Cogan, “Assyrian Spoilation of Divine Images,” in his *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974), 22–41.

¹¹² Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, 215, 305–6.

¹¹³ Recognized already by Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion*, 116–17. Naaman in his attempt to con-

The Destruction and Ritual Mutilation of Statues

At other times, the divine statue was destroyed rather than exiled. The “spoliation” and mutilation of statues is well known in the ancient Near East, especially in Assyrian texts as shown by M. Cogan.¹¹⁴ In fact, as recently shown by A. Ben-Tor, “the intentional destruction of statues goes back to the third millennium B.C.E.”¹¹⁵

Taking his clue from Deut 7:25 (“The graven images of their gods you shall burn with fire ...”¹¹⁶), the Deuteronomist chronicles the destruction of cultic images by numerous kings.¹¹⁷ David carries off and burns the images of retreating Philistines (2 Sam 5:21; cf. 1 Chr 14:12).¹¹⁸ In 2 Sam 12:30, David takes the crown off of the image of Milcom, the Ammonite god.¹¹⁹ Asa removes all the images that his fathers had made, cuts down an asherah image (*miplešet lā ’āšērāh*), and burns it at the brook of Kidron (1 Kgs 15:12–13). Similarly, Hezekiah and Josiah break *maššēbôt* and cut down the asherah (*hā ’āšērāh*, 2 Kgs 18:4; 23:6, 14–15). Hezekiah also breaks the Nehushtan in pieces (2 Kgs 18:4). Baal images are destroyed by kings Joram (2 Kgs 3:2) and Jehu (2 Kgs 10:26–27), as well as the priest Jehoiada (2 Kgs 11:18).

Yet the Deuteronomist’s greatest delight is in relating a story that needs no king to smash the enemy’s deity (1 Sam 5:1–5). Rather, it is a battle of images punching it out (so to speak). In one corner “the Ark of God,” in the other the image of Dagon. Ben-Tor has recently noted how “in all the cases of mutilation” of statues at Hazor, “the heads and hands of the stat-

tinue to worship Yahweh in his homeland of Syria takes with him two loads of Israelite earth (2 Kgs 6:17). Seemingly there was no opportunity to secure an image of (the aniconic?) Yahweh.

¹¹⁴ Cogan, “Assyrian Spoilation of Divine Images,” in his *Imperialism and Religion*, 22–41. The Bavian Rock Inscription of Sennacherib describes the capture and destruction of Babylon: “My men took the (images of the) gods who dwell there and smashed them ... Adad and Shala, the gods of Ekallate, which Marduk-nadin-ahhe, king of Babylon had taken and carried off to Babylon during the reign of Tiglath-pileser (I), king of Assyria, I brought out of Babylon and returned them to their place in Ekallate.” So M. Cogan, “Sennacherib: The Capture and Destruction of Babylon,” *COS* 2:305. See too the enigmatic Papyrus Amherst 63 (the so-called “Aramaic Text in Demotic Script”) which describes the trampling and smashing of the goddess Nanai’s statue (XIII.9–17). See R. C. Steiner’s translation, *COS* 1:319.

¹¹⁵ Ben-Tor, “The Sad Fate of Images and the Statues of Hazor.”

¹¹⁶ Note Cogan (“Assyrian Spoilation of Divine Images,” 116) who shows how David did not do this in 2 Sam 12:30.

¹¹⁷ One judge acts similarly. Gideon tears down the altar of Baal (no mention of his image) and cuts down the asherah (Judg 6:25–32).

¹¹⁸ Cogan (“Assyrian Spoilation of Divine Images,” 116) writes: “2 Sam 5:21 reports that after successfully routing the Philistines at Baal Perazim, David and his men carried off the idols (‘*āsāb*’) left behind by the retreating Philistines.” Cogan is certainly correct that the plain sense of the passage indicates that “David actually despoiled the Philistine images.” The Chronicler has David burning the images (1 Chr 14:12).

¹¹⁹ For the textual criticism on this passage, see McCarter, *II Samuel*, 311–13.



Fig. 4.34. A hoard of Late Bronze Age implements was found in this jar underneath the floor of a later Iron Age (Israelite?) cultic area at Hazor. Among these bronzes was the figurine in fig 4.16. Courtesy Hazor Excavations and The Hebrew University Magnes Press.

ues were the primary targets.”¹²⁰ He notes how the literary image of Dagon suffers the same fate: “Dagon’s head and both his hands were lying broken off upon the threshold; only his trunk was left intact” (1 Sam 5:4).

*The Burial of Statues*¹²¹

The burial of statues (and other cult objects) is well attested in the archaeological record, but rarely attested in texts. For archaeology one thinks of *favissae* with examples ranging from the ‘Ain Ghazal statues to the bronze hoard at Hazor (fig. 4.34). The rationale

of such burials still needs further unpacking. Are cultic images buried out of respect because they are sacral, or out of disdain because they have lost some efficacy? Are these Hazor items heirlooms or scrap metal?

Our best textual reference is Gen 35:4: “So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem.”¹²²

Invisibility

How does invisibility adequately represent the image of God? Aniconic traditions are *not* uniquely Israelite, especially if we take into account (a) Mettinger’s study of material aniconism (i.e., standing stones), (b) studies of programmatic aniconism in Egyptian Amarna theology, and (c) Ornan’s emphasis on the tendency to use inanimate symbols rather than anthropomorphic images in first-millennium Mesopotamia.¹²³ Yet in acknowledging aniconism elsewhere, we should not minimize how ancient

¹²⁰ Ben-Tor, “The Sad Fate of Images and the Statues of Hazor.”

¹²¹ I again express my indebtedness here to A. Ben-Tor.

¹²² O. Keel, “Das Vergraben der ‘fremden Götter’ in Genesis XXXV 4b,” *Vetus Testamentum* 23 (1973): 305–36.

¹²³ T. N. D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism and Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1995). See T. Ornan, “Idols and Symbols: Divine Representation in First Millennium Mesopotamian Art and its Bearing on the Second Commandment,” *Tel Aviv* 31 (2004): 90–121.

Israel developed *and sustained* a theological programme against representing a deity iconographically. In particular, its “empty space aniconism” remains intriguing.

A Caveat

Yet first, a necessary excursus. A bold thesis by H. Niehr demands a hearing before we proceed. Niehr argues that there simply was no “empty space aniconism” in ancient Israel. According to Niehr (and others¹²⁴), there *was* a cult statue of Yahweh in the Jerusalem Temple. We have been duped by the “strong ideological bias” of certain exilic and post-exilic theologians.¹²⁵ According to Niehr, what we have is a “completely misleading picture,” the product of a Deuteronomistic “coalition” of concealment.¹²⁶

Several lines of evidence argue against Niehr’s thesis. There is no mention of any cult image of Yahweh in the biblical corpus or in Mesopotamian literature. Nebuchadnezzar carried off “all the treasures of the temple of Yahweh” and “cut in pieces all the vessels of gold in the temple of Yahweh” (2 Kgs 25:13–17; cf. Jer 52:17–23; 2 Chr 36:18–19). If the cult image of Yahweh was such a preeminent focal point, would not we expect its specific mention? When these vessels are enumerated, they contain bronze pillars, the bronze sea, cult stands, pots, shovels, snuffers, gold and silver basins and bowls, incense dishes, firepans, lampstands, and “other vessels” of even lower importance (2 Kgs 25:13–17; Jer 52:17–23; Ezra 1:7–11). No mention is made of a divine image.

Neither does Jeremiah or any other author refer to the divine image in the delivery of temple vessels in 597 B.C.E. (Jer 27:16–18; 28:3; cf. 2 Kgs 24:13; 2 Chr 36:7, 10). The Babylonian Chronicle mentions “heavy tribute.”¹²⁷ That no mention is made in a Mesopotamian source, with that culture’s emphasis on cult images being taken in battle, is telling.

¹²⁴ Niehr, “In Search of YHWH’s Cult Statue in the First Temple.” For recent works, see B. Schmidt, “The Aniconic Tradition: On Reading Images and Viewing Texts,” in *The Triumph of Elohism: From Yahwisms to Judaism*, ed. D.V. Edelman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 75–105, and C. Uehlinger, “Anthropomorphic Cult Statuary in Iron Age Palestine and the Search for Yahweh’s Cult Images,” in van der Toorn, *The Image and the Book*, 97–155. Niehr’s position is not new. Hallo (“Texts, Statues, and the Cult of the Divine King,” 54) calls the quest for Yahweh-statues a “perennial search” that “goes on apace” (yet he thinks it “unlikely as ever to produce results”). For older works advocating a cult image of Yahweh, see the works of Mowinkel, Loretz, and Dietrich quoted in van der Toorn, *The Image and the Book*, 17.

¹²⁵ Niehr, “In Search of YHWH’s Cult Statue in the First Temple,” 74, 82.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹²⁷ A. Millard, “The Babylonian Chronicle,” *COS* 1:468.

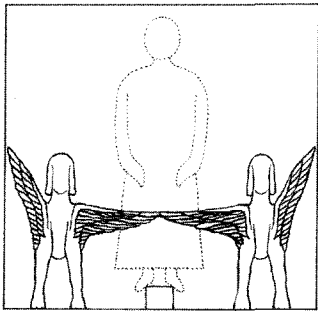


Fig. 4.35. According to biblical tradition (1 Kgs 6:23–28; 8:6–7; 1 Sam 4:4; Isa 37:16), Yahweh is invisibly enthroned on two large cherubim in Solomon's temple. Drawing courtesy of Mettinger, *In Search of God*, fig. 13.

Other biblical texts concur. Earlier, King Ahaz dismantles the bronze altar, cult stands, the laver, the bronze sea and the bronze oxen (2 Kgs 16: 14, 17; cf. 16: 8; 2 Chr 28:24). No mention is made of the destruction of any cult image of Yahweh. When the Judean king Amaziah installs Edomite cultic images (2 Chr 25:14–16), there is no mention of him setting them next to one of Yahweh in a cult niche. Niehr's rebuttal to all of the above could be that we cannot take the biblical texts "at face value."¹²⁸ Yet here he implies that Yahweh's cult statue was stripped of its gold (rendering it "no longer suitable for use in the cult") and then was lost.¹²⁹

Finally, if there was a cult image of Yahweh in the Jerusalem Temple that functioned, according to Niehr, as the focal point of worship, why are there no ritual texts describing its making and consecrating (similar to the texts noted above)?

Admittedly, these are arguments from silence and from texts that have been edited by those sympathetic to aniconic theology. Recently R. Hendel has provided corroboration from an anthropological perspective.¹³⁰ Hendel, blending the insights of J. Barr and M. Douglas, has drawn new attention to the *Leitmotif* of "lethal God sightings" found in non- and pre-Deuteronomistic stories of theophanies (e.g., those of Jacob, Moses, Gideon, Manoah and Isaiah¹³¹). A handful of blessed individuals note with surprise that despite seeing God "face to face," they escaped death. According to Exod 33:20, "one cannot see God and live."

According to Hendel, the belief in "deadly God-sightings" is "best understood as a motif of Israelite folklore, rooted in popular conceptions concerning purity and danger."¹³² Moreover, he asserts (correctly in my opinion) that "the lethal danger of seeing God is ... related to the problem of anthropomorphic representation of deity and to the *de facto* aniconism of the Yahwistic cult."¹³³

¹²⁸ Niehr, "In Search of YHWH's Cult Statue in the First Temple," 74.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹³⁰ R. Hendel, "Aniconism and Anthropomorphism in Ancient Israel," in van der Toorn, *The Image and the Book*, 220–24.

¹³¹ To these one should also add Hagar's encounter with El-Roi in Genesis 16.

¹³² Hendel, "Aniconism and Anthropomorphism," 221.

¹³³ Hendel, "Aniconism and Anthropomorphism," 222.



Fig. 4.36. The Iron Age temple of Ayn Dara in northern Syria has structural features that are very close to the Jerusalem Temple. A series of meter-long footprints were carved into the limestone threshold. They seem to depict a type of aniconic representation of a deity walking into the inner sanctum. At the entrance are two footprints representing the deity standing still. Progressing into the temple are two thresholds each with a single footprint as the deity strides into the inner sanctum. Photo courtesy of A. M. Appa. From Biblical Archaeology Review 26(3), (2000), fig. 27.

If Niehr is correct, that Yahweh had a cult statue and that his adherents regularly viewed Yahweh's image in cult processions similar to those in Mesopotamia and Egypt, how does one account for the traditions of lethal God-sightings? If adherents saw God on a regular basis (and according to Niehr the image in Israel would have been the full embodiment of divinity similar to Mesopotamia), then what would make one think that (a) seeing God was an unusual privilege according only to the blessed few and (b) it was in any way lethal?

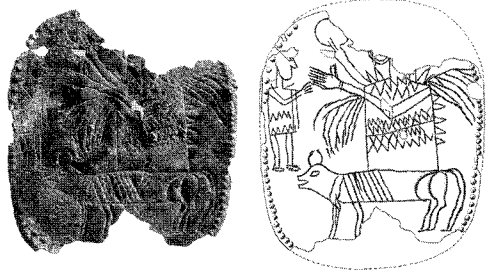
In short, it seems more likely that we should take the biblical tradition at face value in its assertion that there was *not* a cult statue of Yahweh in the Jerusalem Temple.

Conclusion

It seems that humans have always viewed the divine in tangible as well as abstract ways. Thorkild Jacobsen¹³⁴ noted the "tendency to experience

¹³⁴ T. Jacobsen (*Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976], 5, 6, 14) writes as follows: "in ancient Mesopotamian religion ... one can-

Fig. 4.37. A ninth-century B.C.E. bronze plaque from Dan showing a deity (perhaps Ishtar) riding on a bull/ox. Courtesy Israel Exploration Society. From A. Biran, "Two Bronze Plaques and the Huṣṣot of Dan," *Israel Exploration Journal* 49 (1999): 54, fig. 14.



the numinous as immanent" in Mesopotamian religion and yet we read of the awe-inspiring radiance of *melammu*. H. R. Niebuhr speaks of the difference between (a) visible, tangible objects of adoration "of whose reality our senses give us assurance" and (b) objects of adoration that are "essence, ideas, concepts or images that are accessible only to abstract thought."¹³⁵

Humans hunger for the visible, ever desiring to picture the divine in material terms. Sculptors and painters (ancient and modern) have given birth to this yearning as the examples above attest.¹³⁶ Writers use anthropomorphisms to dress their god in human clothes, deeds and actions. Yet for others, divine essence cannot be so crafted without demotion. For them, abstract ideas "exercise a certain compulsion over the mind ... known only by a kind of empathy or by an intuition that outruns sense."¹³⁷

Aten is light (fig. 1.1). How can one truly craft light and it still be light?¹³⁸ Yahweh is invisible (fig. 4.35). Can such be crafted? Yahweh appears in fire. But once concretized fire cannot burn or instill the feeling of the numinous.¹³⁹ A stone image of fire can be held in hand. That's the problem. Yahweh is "he who is." How does one craft "being"?¹⁴⁰

not but note a tendency to experience the numinous as immanent ... rather than as all transcendent" (p. 5); "numinous power as a revelation of indwelling spirit, as power at the center of something that caused it to be and thrive and flourish" (p. 6); "the fashioning of images of the god sought and achieved his lasting presence" (p. 14).

¹³⁵ H. R. Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1960), 120.

¹³⁶ See C. Meyers ("Temple, Jerusalem," *ABD* 6:359) who notes that "although the God of Israel was viewed as transcendent" the temple served to meet "the need for the assurance of divine availability." She speaks of "humanity's insecurity about the nearness of divine power and protection."

¹³⁷ Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture*, 120.

¹³⁸ I. Cornelius, "The Many Faces of God," in van der Toorn, *The Image and the Book*, 29.

¹³⁹ Cf. the use of fire as symbolic for divine presence in Zoroastrianism.

¹⁴⁰ Lewis, "Divine Images and Aniconism in Ancient Israel," 51–52.

Footprints left behind (such as the giant ones at Ayn Dara; fig. 4.36¹⁴¹) evoke feelings of wonder that gold and silver cannot match. Similarly, an empty cherub throne (though huge and powerful¹⁴²) suggests that “less is more”—uncontained vastness trumping material existence.

Thanks to archaeology, our repertoire of Syro-Palestinian divine images will continue to expand and so will our frustrations and challenges. For example, who is the bull/ox rider on the ninth-century bronze plaque from Dan (fig. 4.37) recently published by A. Biran?¹⁴³ And yet, if Yahweh is said to have “dwelt in thick darkness” (1 Kgs 8:12), why would we assume that seeing the divine would be anything but a murky enterprise?

¹⁴¹ The Iron Age site of Ayn Dara, Syria, has only recently been used in treatments of ancient Near Eastern aniconism. See T. J. Lewis, “Divine Images and Aniconism in Ancient Israel,” 40; J. Monson, “The New ‘Ain Dara Temple: Closest Solomonic Parallel,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 26.3 (2000): 20–35, 67. The builders of this amazing temple took a unique approach to depicting the divine: dramatize the deity (a goddess?) as transcendent and immanent at the same time by making her disappear and yet leave a trace of her presence. We find a series of three huge footprints (measuring approximately three feet in length). They depict the deity entering the temple and walking back to the inner sanctum where the statue of the deity would normally be found. At the entrance to the temple we find both footprints represented. As one walks into the temple we find two thresholds each with a single footprint: first the left foot, followed by the right foot. The ancient artisans seem to be portraying the deity standing at the entrance to the temple and then walking left foot after the right, into the inner sanctum. One knows the deity is present, not from a statue, but from the footprints she leaves behind.

¹⁴² See note 68 above.

¹⁴³ A. Biran, “Two Bronze Plaques and the Huššot of Dan,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 49 (1999): 53–54. T. Ornan (personal communication) sees the figure as a female deity of the type “Ishtar surrounded by a ring” of stars, dots, and triangles characteristic only in first-millennium depictions of the goddess.

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